CORNUCOPIA

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TURKEY FOR CONNOISSEURS

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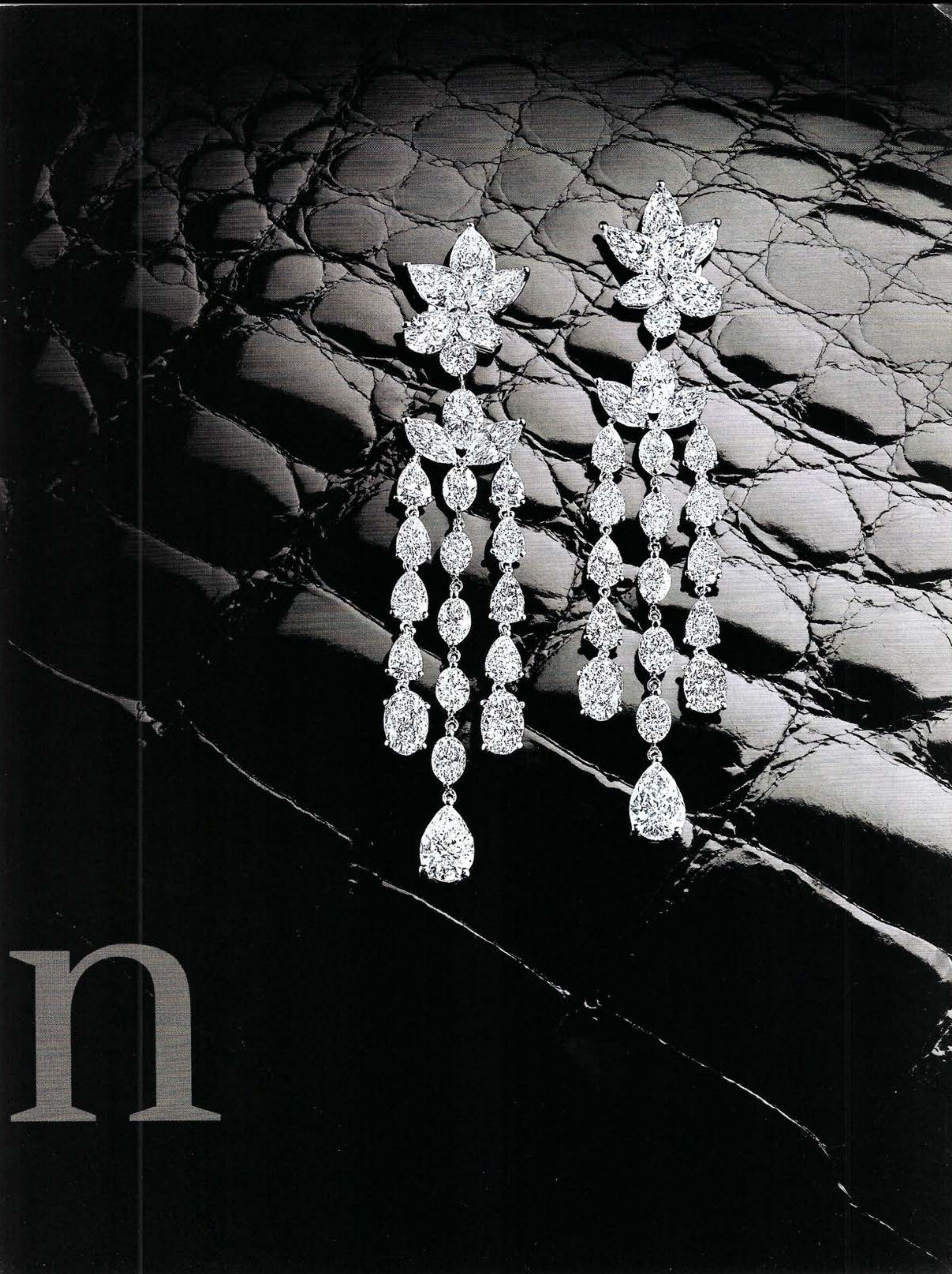

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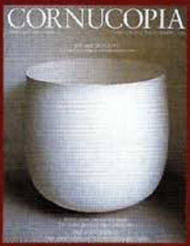

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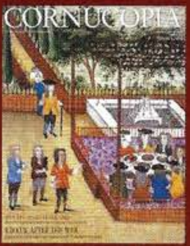

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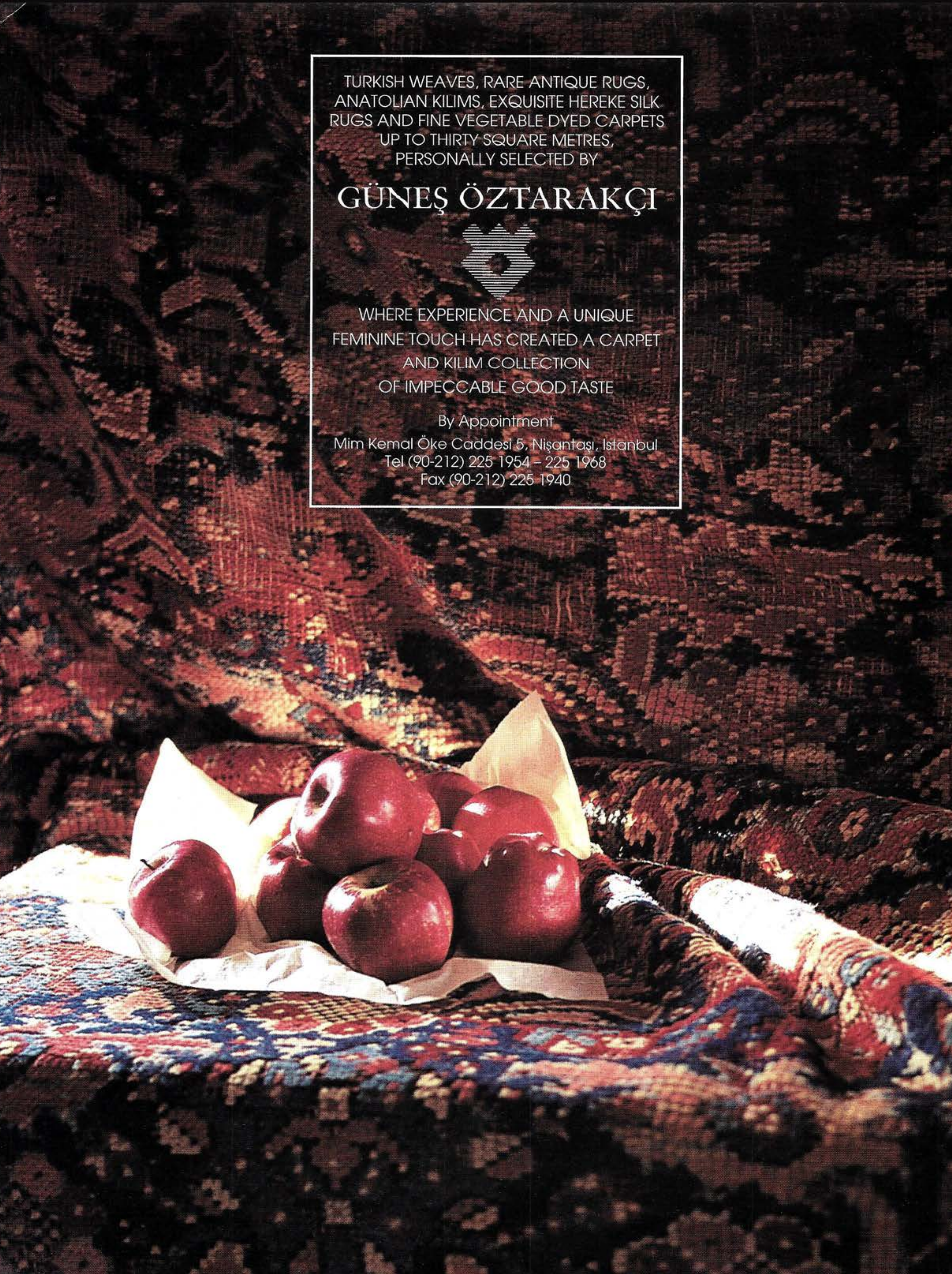
Johannes jan Vermeer, *The Girl with a Pearl Earring,* Mauritshuis Royal Picture Gallery, Netherlands



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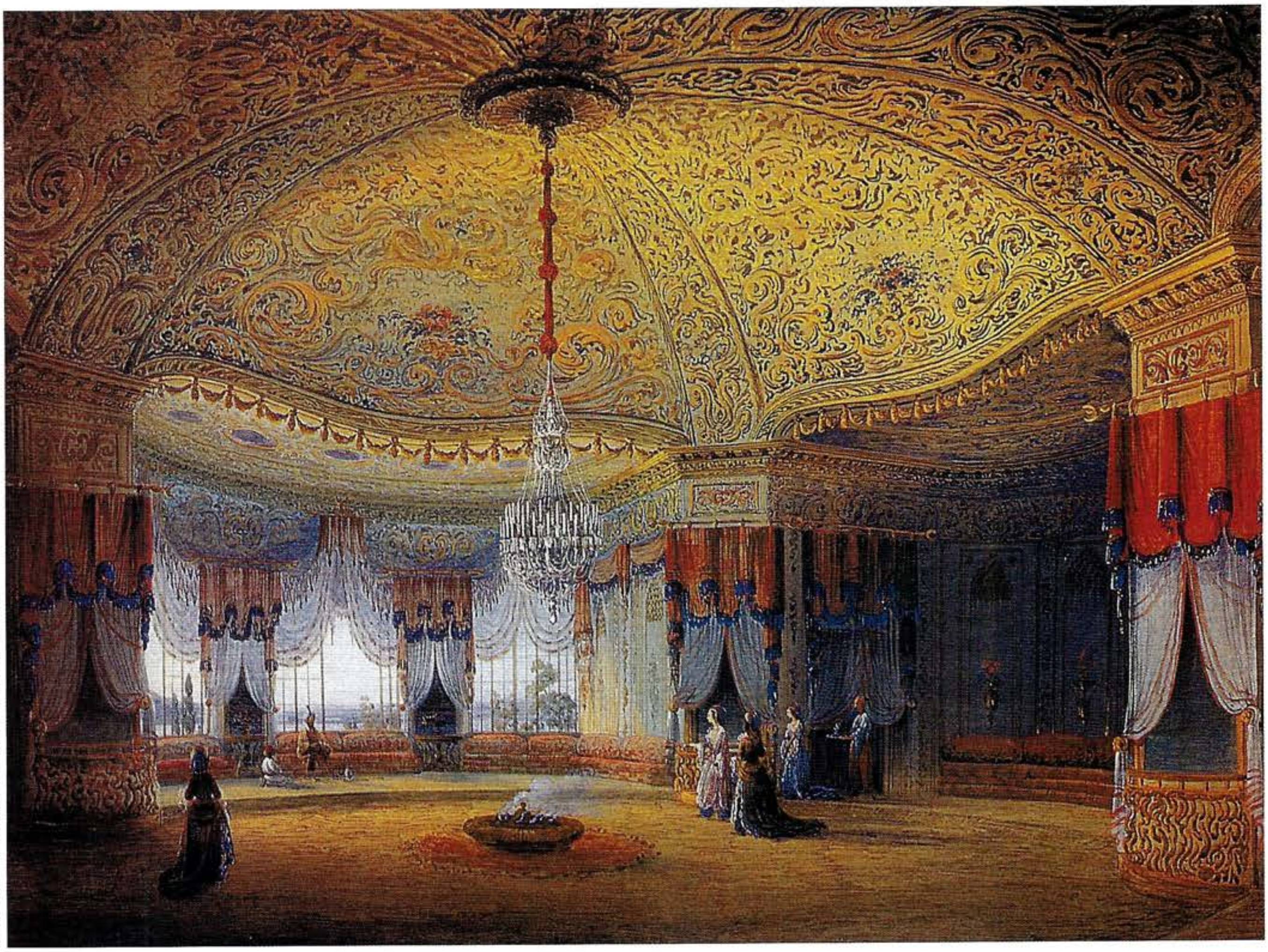
CONNOISSEUR

FROM MOTHER GODDESSES TO LADIES OF THE HAREM,
A BRUSSELS BLOCKBUSTER CAPTURES THE CHANGING SHAPE OF WOMANHOOD IN TURKEY
OVER MORE THAN TEN THOUSAND YEARS



OYA AND BÜLENT ECZACIBAŞI COLLECTION, ISTANBUL

WOMEN OF THE TOPKAPI HAREM ATTEND THE SULTAN

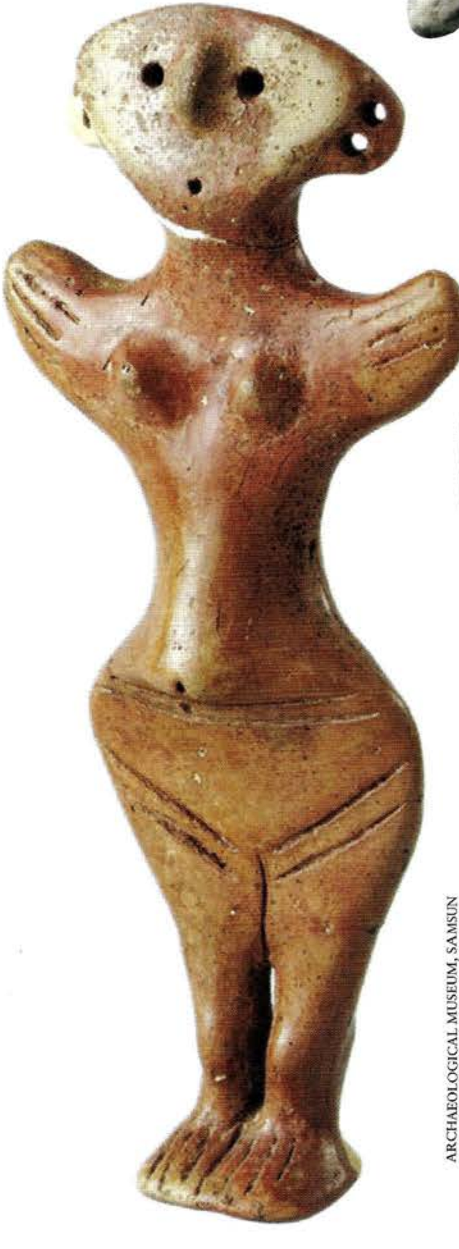
Palace Interior, a gouache exhibited in Brussels, was painted from memory in 1845 by the Italian Carlo Bossoli. It shows the Gülhane pavilion, a late addition to the Topkapı, whose extravagant draperies and gilded ceiling cost so much to maintain that the building had to be torn down in 1865

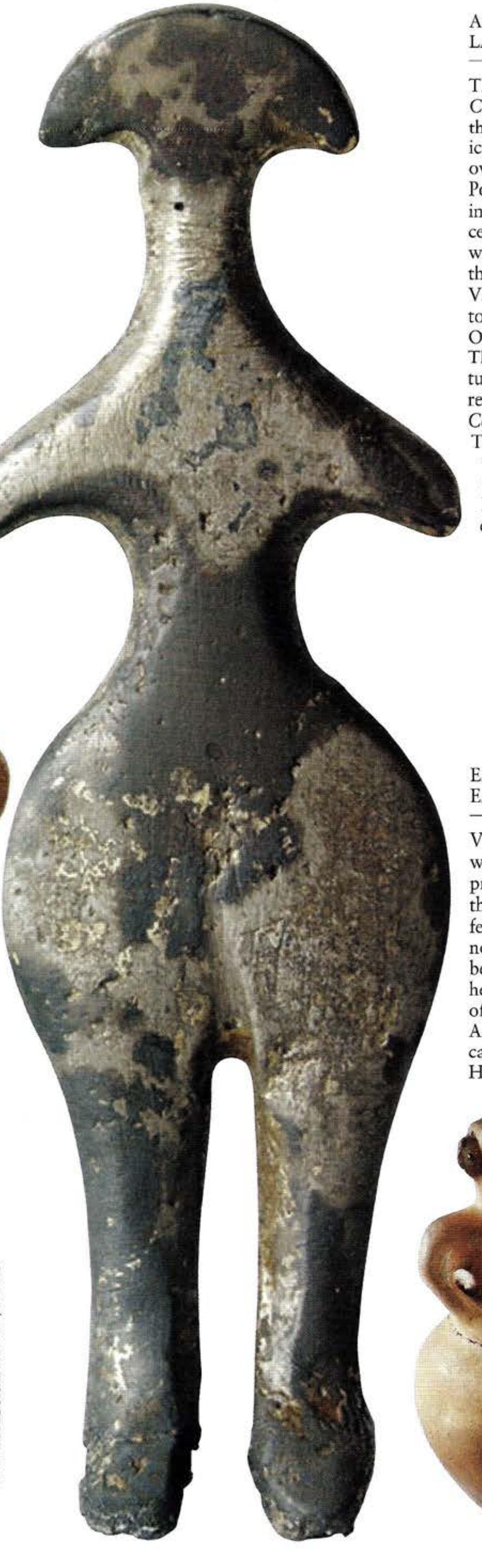
Mothers, Goddesses and Sultans, at the Brussels Palais des Beaux Arts, was the first of this winter's blockbusters devoted to things Turkish. From rotund Neolithic goddesses to lithe Amazon warriors and the discreet charms of the Ottoman harem, it explored ten millennia of Anatolian history through changing images of women. This issue's Connoisseur pages are dedicated to highlights of the show.

But Brussels was just an appetiser for the second landmark event, *Turks: A Journey of a Thousand Years, 600–1600*, which opened to huge crowds in London in January (see page 35). Strikingly, the same two redoubtable women – Filiz Çağman, the Topkapı's outgoing director, and Nazan Ölçer, who for thirty years ran the Istanbul Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art – masterminded both exhibitions.

EARLY BRONZE AGE FIGURINES

Prehistoric woman morphed markedly over the millennia. The idealised form was voluminous in 6000 BC (see page 10) but decidedly slimmer by the early Bronze Age (third millennium BC): these two figurines have full hips but tiny waists.
Right: made from silver and measuring just 7cm, this figurine was found in the grave of a high-ranking woman buried in an ornate diadem and copious gold jewellery. It is one of the treasures from Alacahöyük in Ankara's Museum of Anatolian Civilisations.
Below: this clay figure (seen actual size) was found further north, at Ikiztepe, on the Black Sea, and is from the Archaeological Museum in nearby Samsun.





ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM, SAMSUN

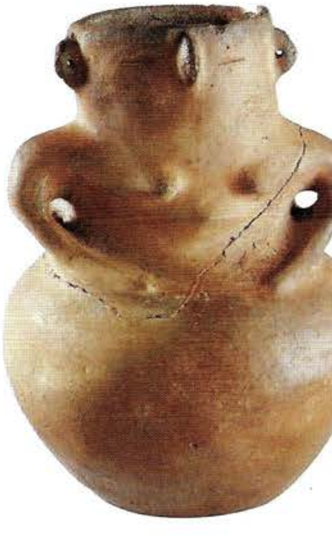
AN 18TH-CENTURY OTTOMAN LADY DRINKING COFFEE

The artist of *A Lady Drinking Coffee* (right) is unknown, but the source of this Orientalist icon, a version of which was owned by Madame de Pompadour, would have been instantly familiar to 18th-century French society. It was a widely published engraving by the Flemish Jean Baptiste Vanmour, one of the few artists to have witnessed life at the Ottoman court at first hand. The pearl necklace and fanciful turban were lifted from a less reliable source, *The Travels of Cornelis de Bruyn* of 1698. This privately owned painting will be a centrepiece of the Orientalist gallery of Istanbul's new Pera Museum, due to open in June 2005.

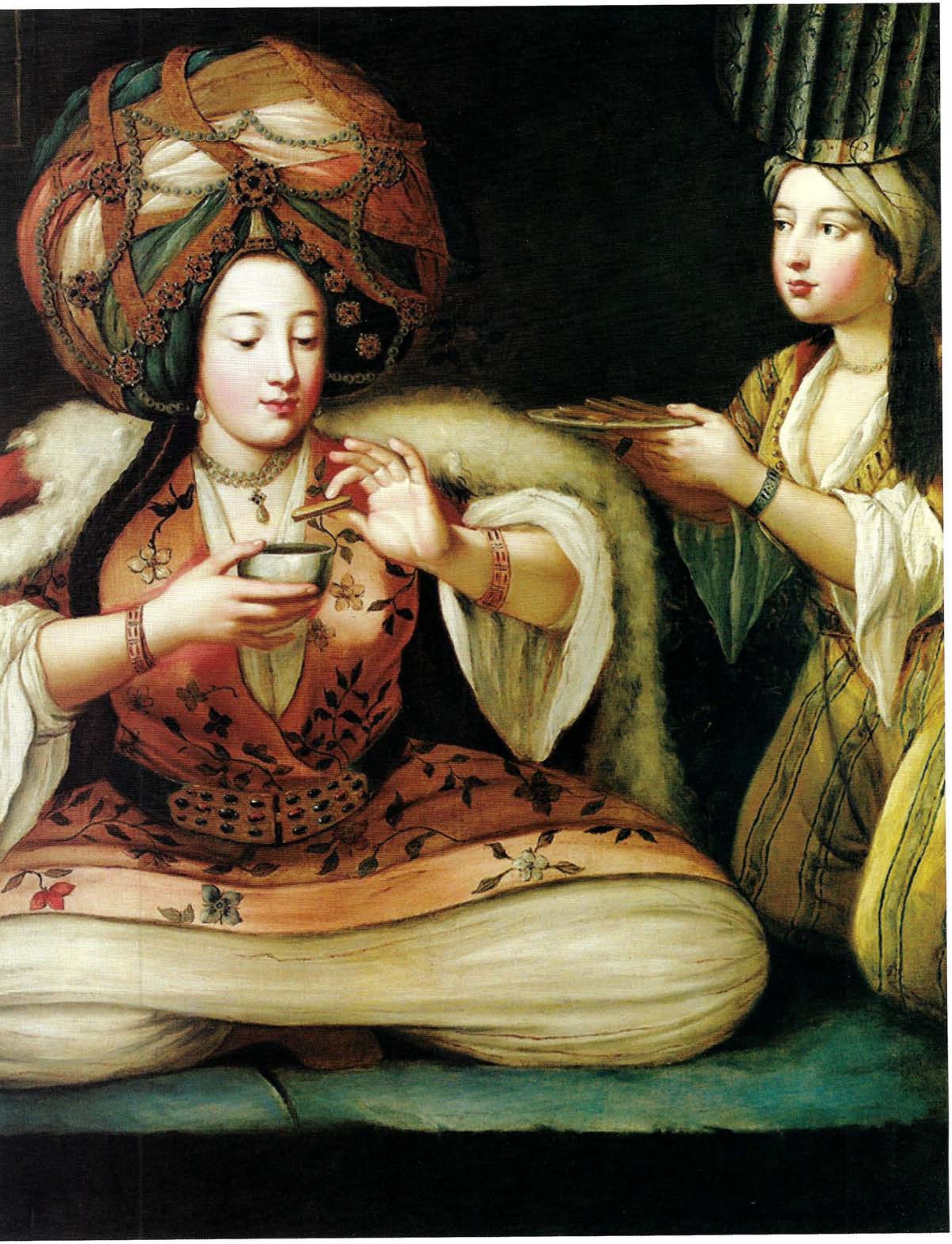
SEVGI AND DOĞAN GÖNÜL COLLECTION, ISTANBUL

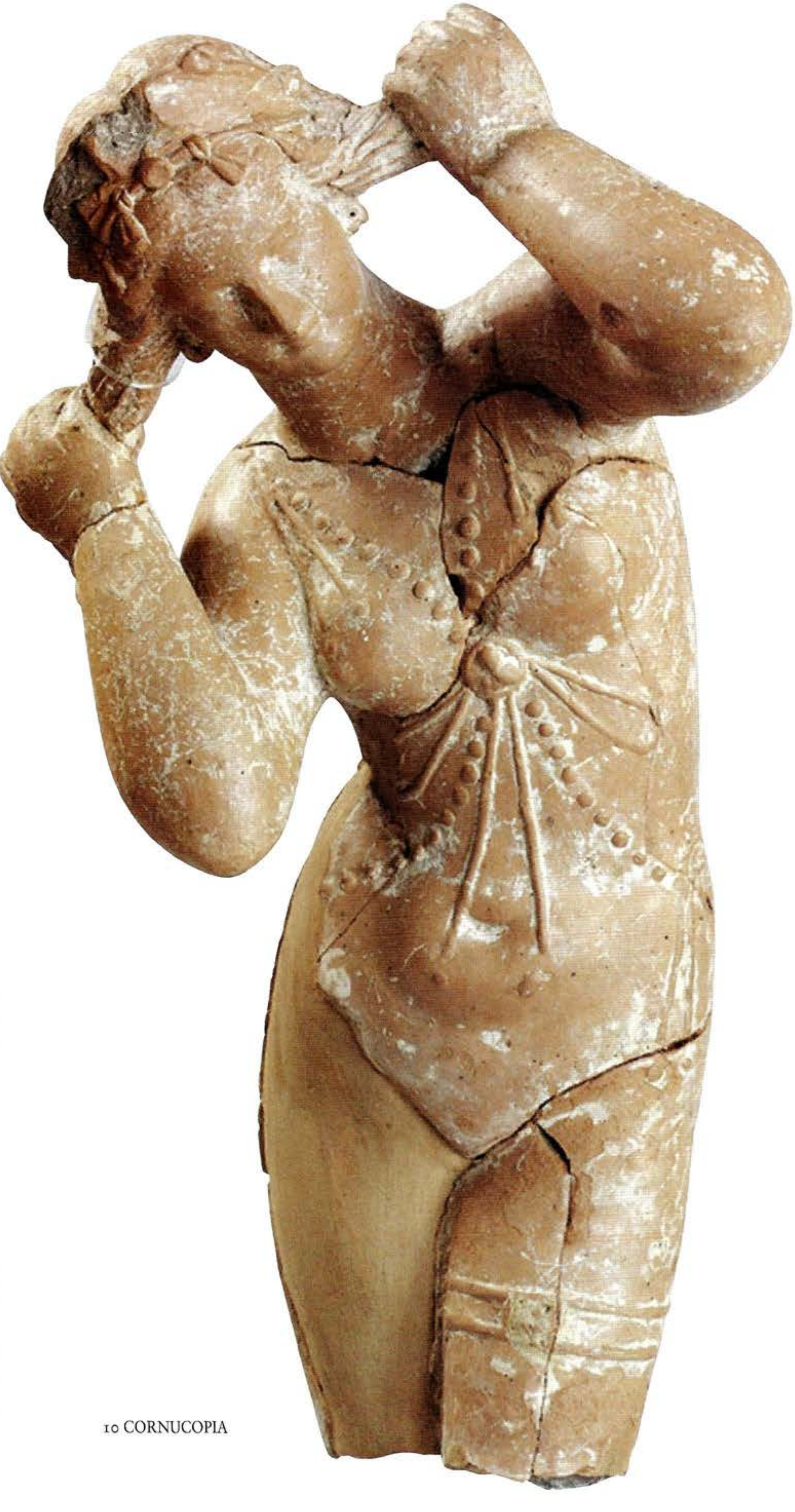
EARTHENWARE VESSEL EARLY 5TH MILLENNIUM BC

Vessels for food and drink were often given the form of a pregnant woman, underlining the link between food and fertility. Discovered in Bolu in northwest Anatolia, the figure below, her hands resting on her belly, is from the Museum of Anatolian Civilisations in Ankara. Similar-shaped pots can be found in the Sadberk Hanım Museum in Istanbul.

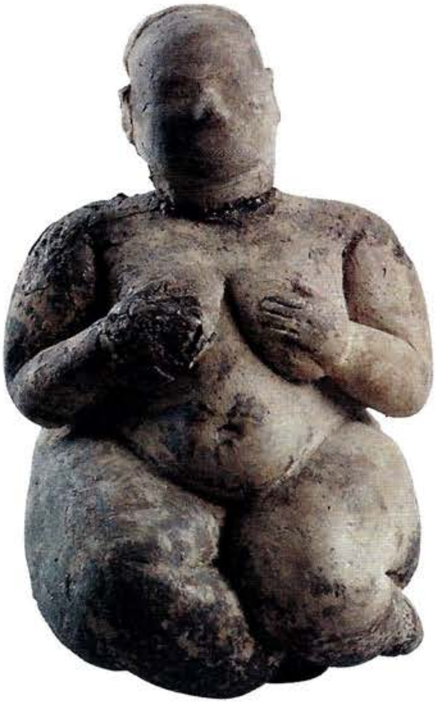


MUSEUM OF ANATOLIAN CIVILISATIONS, ANKARA





ISTANBUL ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUMS



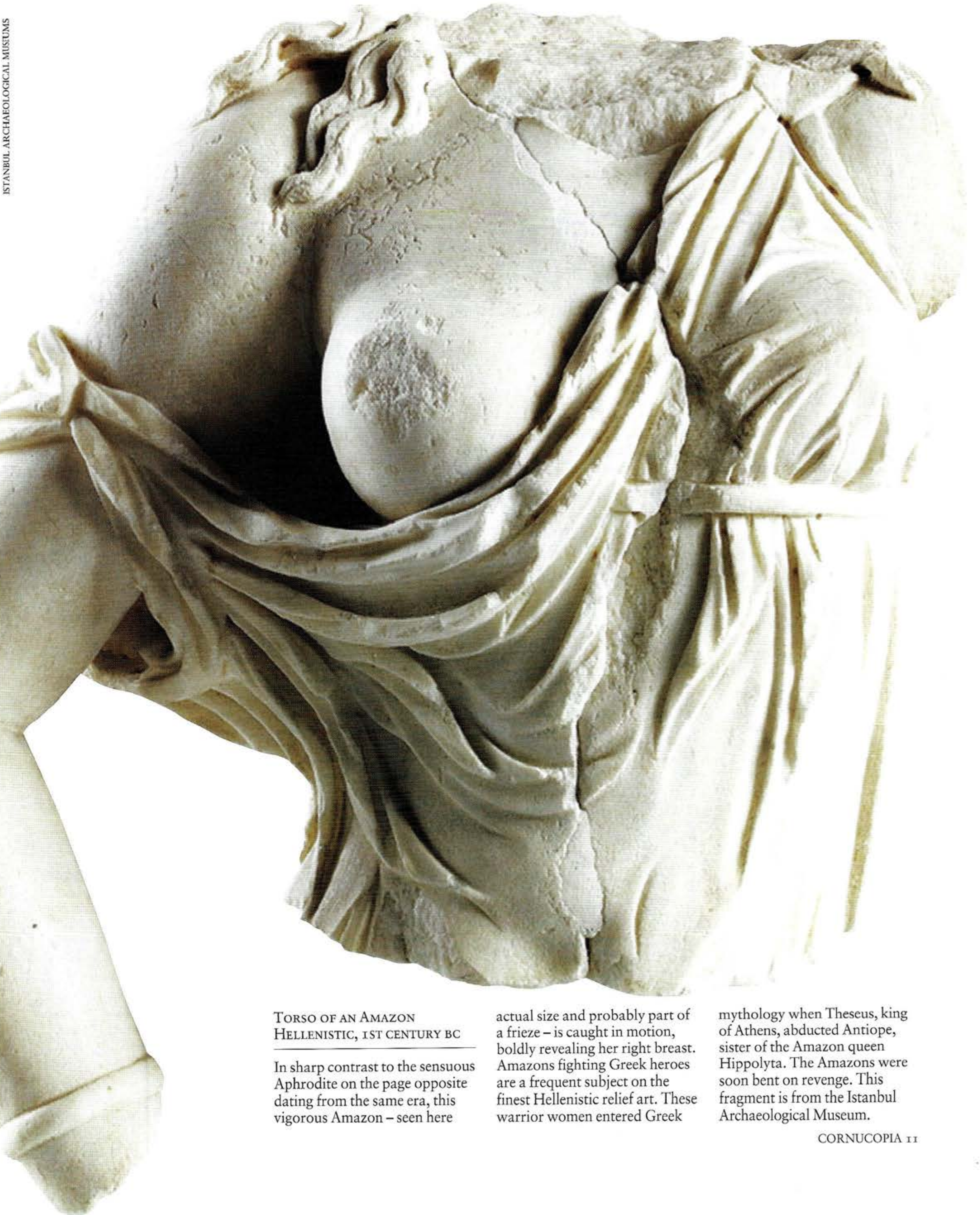
MUSEUM OF ANATOLIAN CIVILISATIONS, ANKARA

FIGURINE OF A GODDESS
NEOLITHIC, 6TH MILLENNIUM BC

One of the earliest figures in Brussels is a Neolithic deity (above) unearthed by the brilliant James Mellaart in the 1960s at Çatalhöyük, near Konya. As the world's first city, this site deserves to be better known: a matriarchal society worshipping the mother goddess, it marks the point in prehistory when animals began to be domesticated, crops to be sown, goods to be traded. Its people built the first mudbrick houses, erected temples and painted murals. This figurine (actual size) is modelled in clay with striking naturalism, clearly the result of a long tradition of sculpture; indeed similar figurines were being carved in stone at Çatalhöyük a millennium earlier. It is from the Museum of Anatolian Civilisations in Ankara.

APHRODITE ANADYOMENE
HELLENISTIC, 1ST CENTURY BC

This exquisite Aphrodite (left) was discovered at Myrina, on the Aegean. The goddess of love and beauty, who emerged from the waves off the coast of Cyprus, is seen here in a diaphanous shift, wringing her still-wet hair. In terracotta and 36mm high, she is part of the rich Hellenistic collection at the Istanbul Archaeological Museum.



ISTANBUL ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUMS

Torso of an Amazon
Hellenistic, 1st century BC

In sharp contrast to the sensuous Aphrodite on the page opposite dating from the same era, this vigorous Amazon – seen here actual size and probably part of a frieze – is caught in motion, boldly revealing her right breast. Amazons fighting Greek heroes are a frequent subject on the finest Hellenistic relief art. These warrior women entered Greek mythology when Theseus, king of Athens, abducted Antiope, sister of the Amazon queen Hippolyta. The Amazons were soon bent on revenge. This fragment is from the Istanbul Archaeological Museum.

CONNOISSEUR'S DIARY

ISTANBUL MODERN

GO TO GASP: THE NEW ISTANBUL MODERN MUSEUM

CONTEMPORARY ART

ISTANBUL MODERN

An ultra-sleek and stylish new museum of contemporary art emerged in December 2004 after decades as a run-down dockside warehouse. And more than 100,000 Istanbullus turned up to gasp in the first two months. The museum, Istanbul Modern, will host international exhibitions but it also has a fine holding of modern Turkish art. Its first major show, which runs from April 14 until August, is a retrospective of 300 works by Fikret Muallâ (1903–67). His serene tableaux (such as *Still Life with Fish*, below) belie the turbulent life he led in Paris. He was the classic bohemian, painting in a garret, frequenting the Left Bank café La Palette and fighting a losing battle with drink. Photography will also feature prominently, and portraits of artists from Chagal to Picasso by eight leading Turkish photographers are the subject of *Buluşma/Rendez-Vous*, showing from March 29 to June 19.

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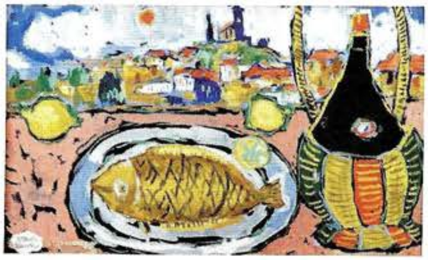


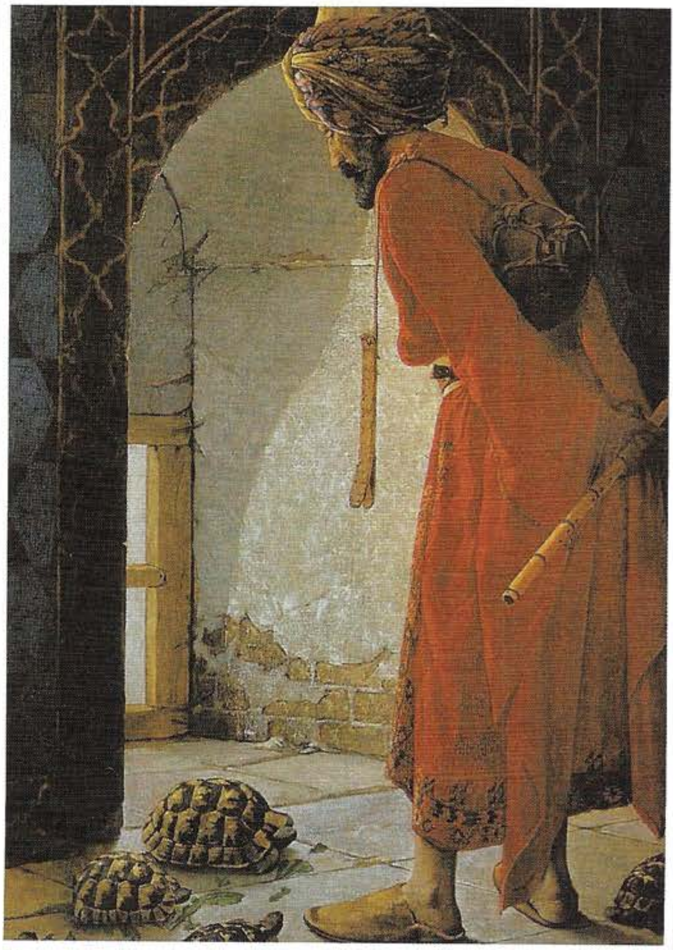
STILL LIFE BY FIKRET MUALLÂ

ORIENTALISM

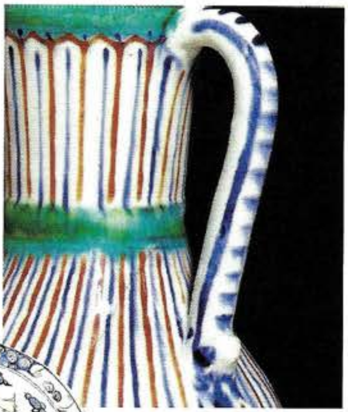
THE PERA MUSEUM

Concealed behind an august Italianate façade in Beyoğlu, the Pera Museum will share the same view as the Pera Palas Hotel when it opens in June. Besides serving as a historical research institute for Istanbul (a Byzantine exhibition is scheduled for later in the year), it has inherited a fine collection of Orientalist art, including the painting that appears on this issue's cover, *A Lady Drinking Coffee*. The museum has made waves before even opening by outbidding Istanbul Modern for *The Tortoise Trainer*, an enigmatic 1906 work by Osman Hamdi Bey. The price, $3.5 million, is the highest ever paid for a Turkish painting. Osman Hamdi Bey trained in Paris and became an archaeologist and the only successful Ottoman Orientalist.

Tepebaşı, Beyoğlu, Istanbul, from June 2005.



RECORD-SETTER: OSMAN HAMDI BEY'S 'THE TORTOISE TRAINER'



IZNIK POTTERY

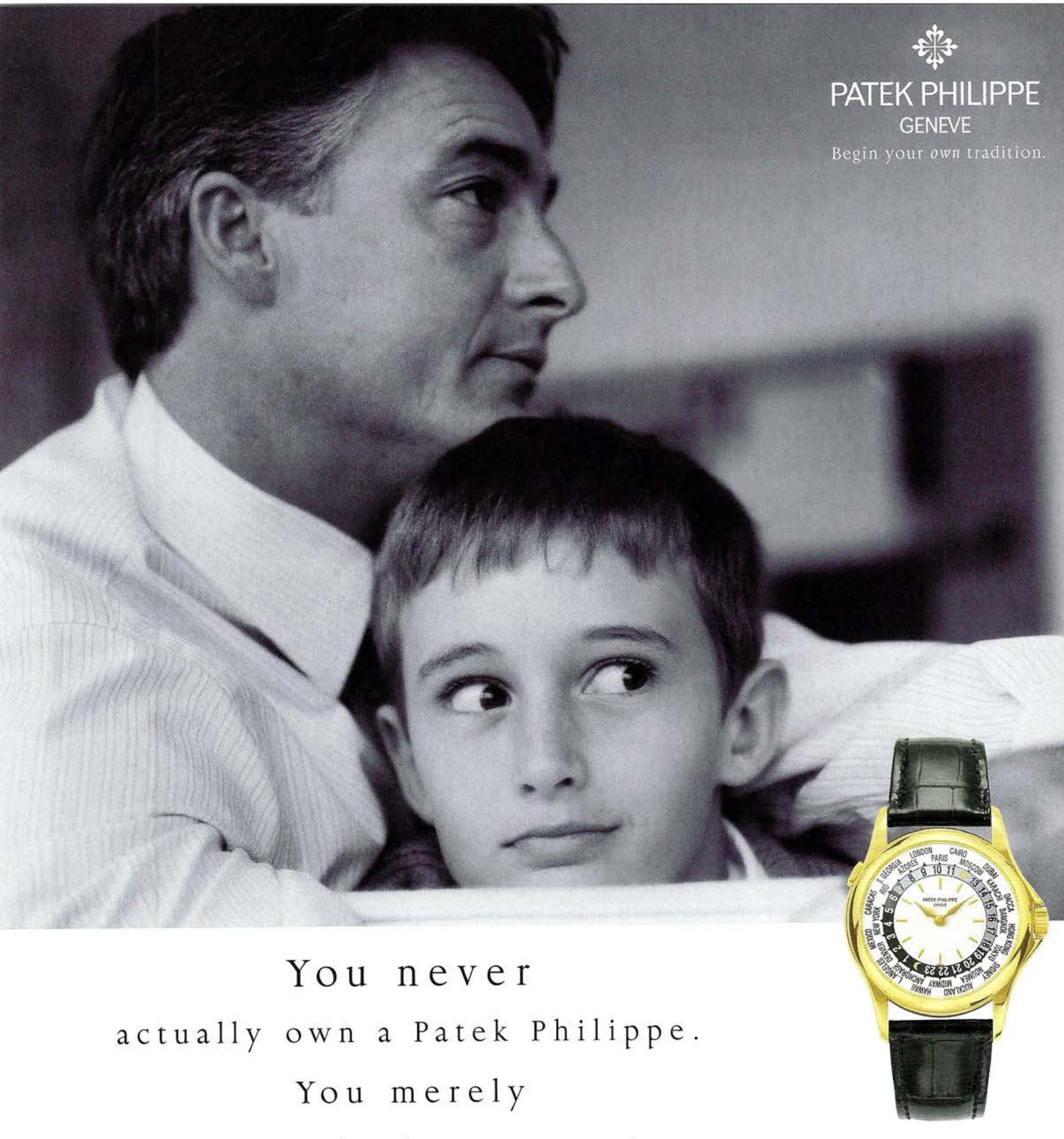
LONDON SALES

The big three London auction houses all have Iznik pieces in their April Islamic sales. At Christie's the Vincent Bulent collection of 85 16th-century pieces, including the striped ewer pictured above, is the largest to come on the market since 1968 (est. £18–120,000). Sotheby's offerings include an early 17th-century Iznik dish with a galleon design, pictured above left (est. £8-10,000).

ISLAMIC ART FROM THE V&A

USA AND JAPAN

This luscious Iznik lantern is one of the V&A treasures touring the world while the London museum's new Islamic galleries are decked out. Last year *Palace and Mosque* was in Washington DC; in the spring it goes to the Kimbell, Fort Worth (April 3–Sept 4), and in the autumn to Tokyo's Setagaya Art Museum (Oct 22 – Dec 11). See Book Offers (page 32) for the excellent catalogue.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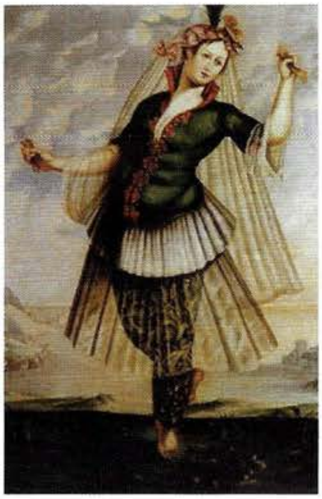
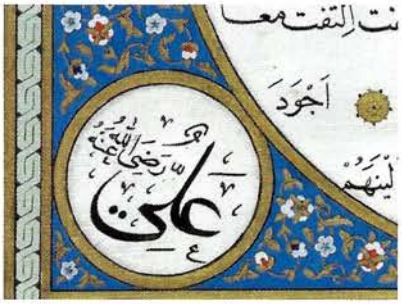


THE 'TURQUERIES' OF PTUJ

SAKIP SABANCI MUSEUM

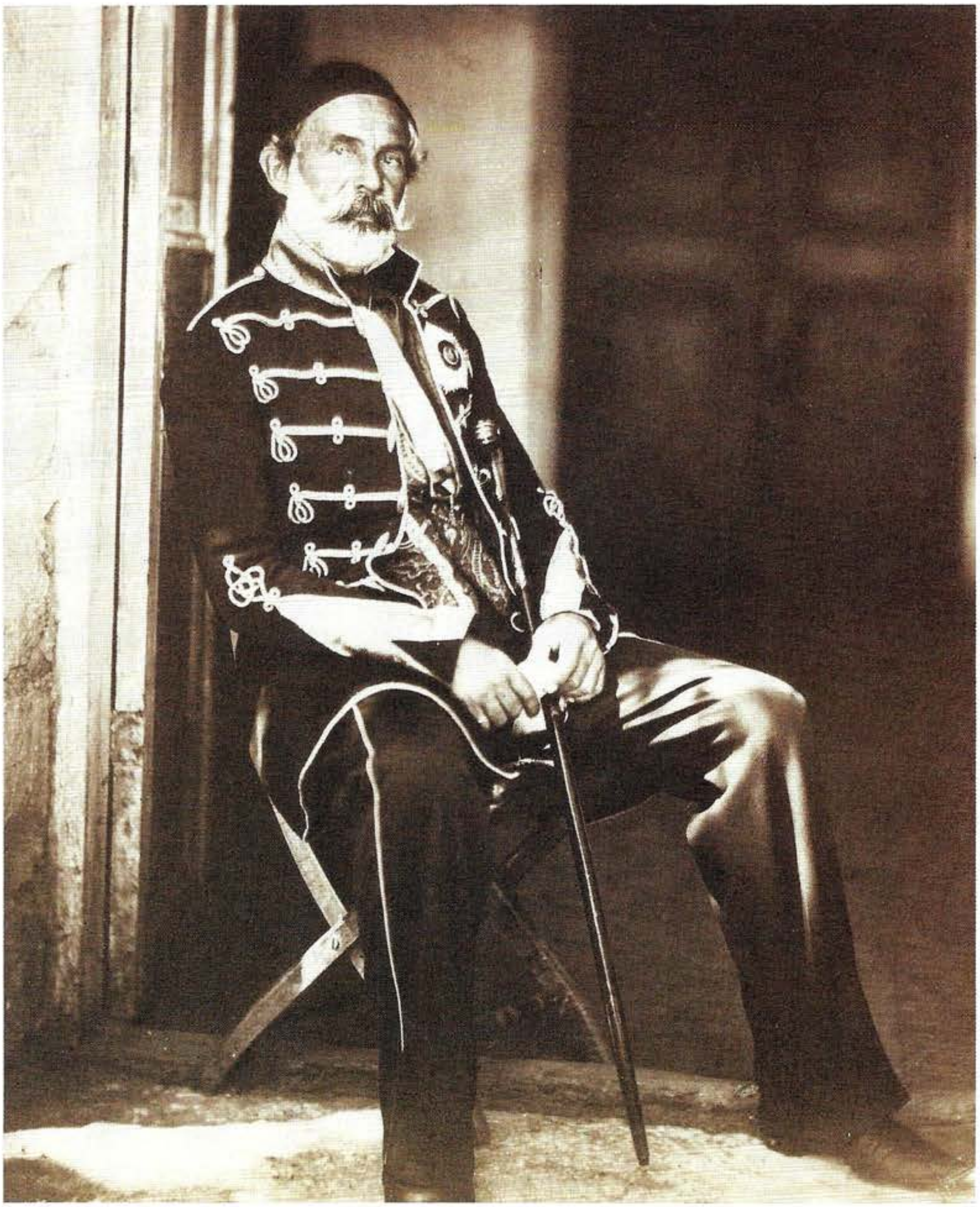
From July 8, the SSM is exhibiting a series of gigantic costume paintings and portraits from the ceremonial hall of Ptuj Castle in Slovenia. They were painted in oil for the Habsburg nobleman Johann Josef Herberstein on his return from a diplomatic mission to Istanbul in 1666. Between eminent Turkish and European commanders and dignitaries is this delightful dancing 'belle'. +90 212 277 2200; www.muze.sabanciuniv.edu



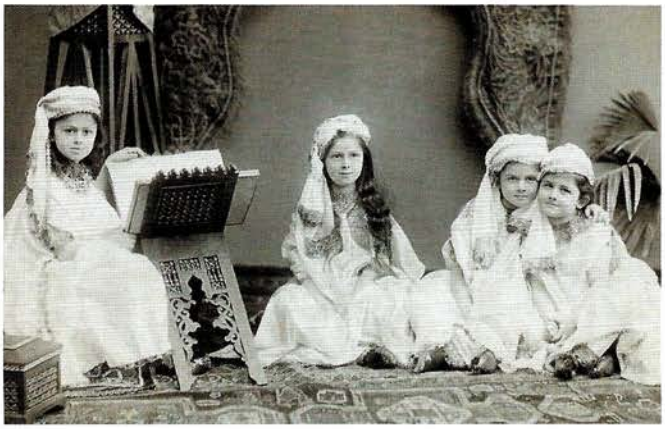
CALLIGRAPHY

BRITISH MUSEUM

The Making of the Master in the BM's Islamic Gallery (April 26 – Sept 3) highlights the teaching of traditional Arabic calligraphy. On display are the diplomas *(icazetname)* of the renowned Turkish master Üstad Hasan Çelebi and of recent students such as Hilâl Kazan. Practice sheets written over a period of years by Nassar Mansour, with his master's corrections, are a testament to the lengthy and rigorous training the art involves. www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk



ABOVE: ÖMER LÜTFI PASHA, BY ROGER FENTON, 1855. BELOW: DIETRICH'S EGYPTIAN PRINCESSES, 1905



PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHS

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To launch a majestic new tome on early portrait photography by Bahattin Öztuncay, the Sadberk Hanım has 40 portraits spanning 50 years, from the last days of the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic. They include Fenton's portrait of the Turkish commander in the Crimean War and daughters of the Egyptian Khedive, Abbas Hilmi Pasha, by Paul Dietrich. +90 212 242 3813
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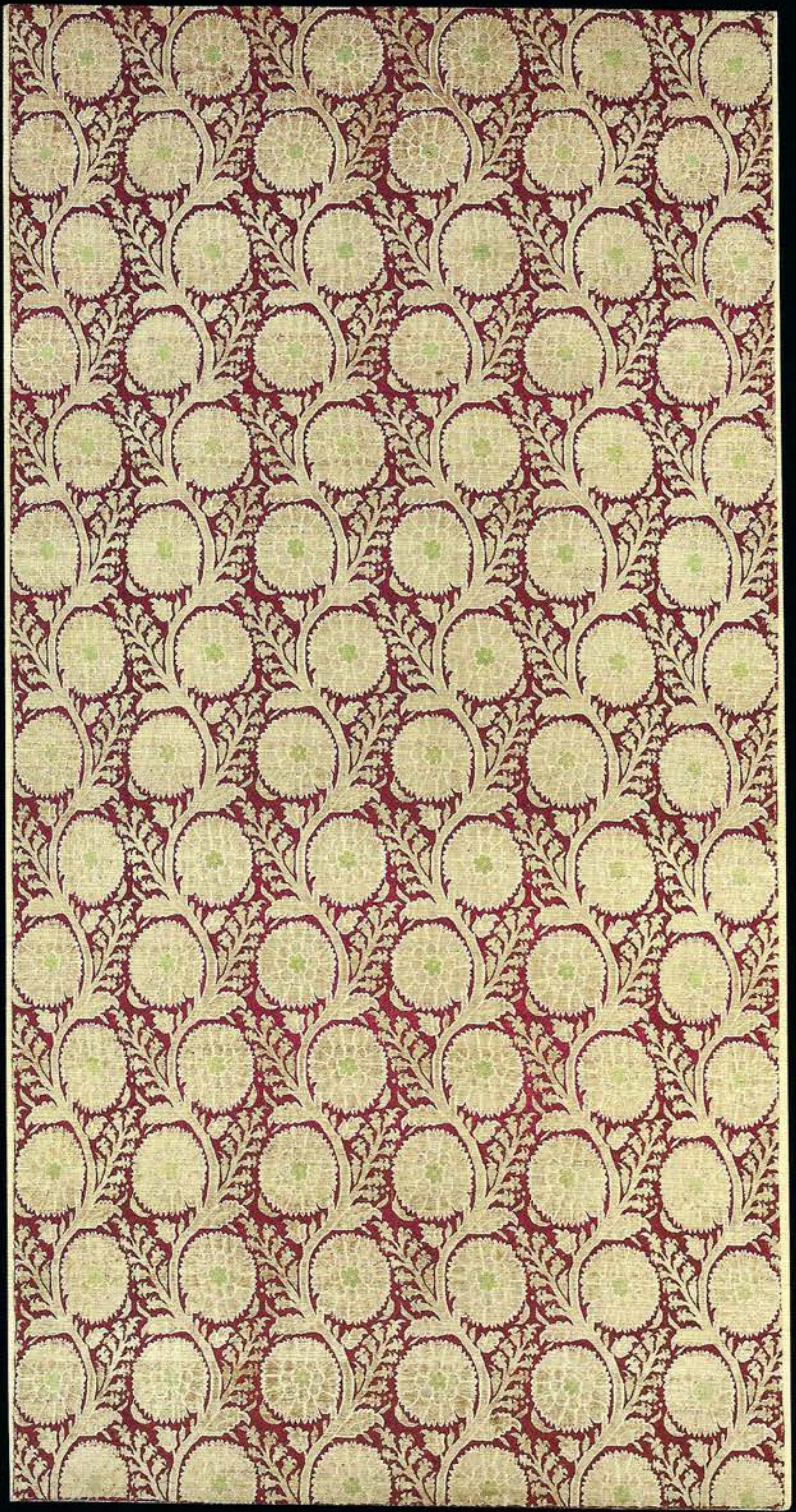

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Private view

Andrew Finkel hones his bargaining skills, fears for the future of one of Istanbul's greatest domes, sees London fall to the Turks, and follows the latest twists and turns on Turkey's road to EU membership

A bazaar experience

I no longer believe e-mails that tell me the widow of the late Jonas Savimbi has chosen my bank account to launder the $10 million sale of illicit Angola diamonds. I even question how I could have won the grand prize in the Bratislava municipal lottery without a ticket. I have been trained to be cynical. Before spam there were salesmen in the covered bazaar who made equally selfless offers to buy me tea.

It is, I recognise, a particular form of vanity to be quite so irritated by the human spammers who roam the historic quarters of Istanbul, and whose offer of friendship is a thinly concealed ruse to flog a bronze-plated samovar. I feel personally affronted that they mistake me for some hapless tourist rather than the sophisticated resident of Istanbul I really am. What pains me even more is the way visitors to Istanbul actually enjoy the experience of being accosted by strangers as an initiation into Oriental charm – a close encounter with another way of life, like eating snails in France or having a Thai masseuse dance the *pas seul* from *Giselle* up and down their spine. And they love the bargaining even more. The carpet they end up buying may have been woven by mountain nomads or on a power loom in Bangladesh, but it still comes with a deep patina of anecdotes about hard but friendly bargaining and lots and lots of tea.

The sadder truth is that I take no pleasure in roaming fancy modern shopping centres, where insincerity is simply institutionalised. When the shop assistant quotes the price, my temptation is to snort and offer half. I have witnessed many changes in Turkey, but one I live through every day is the redefinition of what it means to be a consumer. The sort of people who inspect labels now would have had their clothes hand-tailored then. We marvelled at food stores where you took your groceries off the shelves into a basket, took them to a checkout counter, and paid in cash. Those who had no cash got by to the end of the month on tick from their local grocer, and not on credit from a card. One of the least-remembered aspects of martial law after 1980 is that, along with a midnight curfew, it imposed taxi meters. Even if you had to get home early, you saved time by not having to bargain over the fare at journey's end.

The revolution in Turkey has only just begun. The furniture giant Ikea is about to launch its largest European store in Istanbul, and Tesco is about to challenge the supermarket supremacy of Migros, who in turn are talking to Wal-mart. International retailers still regard Turkey as a "disorganised market" and see huge profits to be made by bringing their own brutal discipline. But the world of the bazaar is fighting back. In the top-end İç Bedesten section of the Grand Bazaar, and in the Arasta, below the Sultanahmet Mosque, the professional association has issued a restraining order on members harassing passers-by. As for haggling once you are inside – that is not yet dead but may be reduced to "heritage", a quaint activity, like Morris dancing.

I had a chance to think this through while I was trying to return a mobile phone in London at a place called the Carphone Warehouse. This is one of those ultra-sophisticated operations which is now moving on from merely selling phones to running a telephone network in competition with BT. I dare say it is just a short step to them being asked to run Iraq. The only trouble is that the phone they sold me didn't work. Its replacement broke down as well. I spent two hours getting justice – arguing with the shop assistant, negotiating with his manager, then talking to their supplier and another senior manager on the phone. It was a small victory, won with skills, I later realised, acquired through hours of bargaining in the covered bazaar.

Dome truths

Mathematicians converse on the skyline of Istanbul. To define the overriding attraction of this city or summarise its greatness you simply have to point to the enormous domes that dominate the horizon. Constructing a dome was an assertion of civilisation for both the Byzantines and the Ottomans, just as preserving the work of those civilisations has become a test of our own values.

At present there is a project worth $3 million to restore one of the earliest and most important domed buildings in Istanbul. The church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus was built by Emperor Justinian in 527 and turned into a mosque nearly 1,000 years later, under the patronage of Beyazit II's white eunuch, Hüseyin Ağa, whose gravestone is in the cemetery garden. It was renamed Küçük Ayasofya Camii (the Small Haghia Sofia Mosque) but is by no means simply a miniature version of its more imposing namesake. It is a building of stunning innovation – an irregular octagon dome, inscribed into an even more irregular rectangular base, and a total contrast to all church architecture that came before it.

The building is in grave danger. It is literally built on sand – or, more accurately, stones embedded in sand – which allows it to float freely. However, a proximity to the suburban train line, along with the 1999 earthquake, have conspired to produce major structural damage. Its restoration is a matter of urgency and, because of the building's extraordinary significance, many international bodies, including the

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World Heritage Fund, offered to become involved in providing expertise and finance.

In the end, these offers were politely rejected. The General Directorate of Pious Foundations (Vakıflar), acting through the Greater Istanbul Municipality, awarded a lucrative contract to the Ankara firm Abide İnşaat (Monument Construction), who have in turn subcontracted supervision of the project to the firm run by the architect Mehmet Alper, the man responsible for the controversial restoration of Istanbul's Maiden's Tower. In an interview, Mr Alper acknowledged the complexity of the task he faced and said he saw the project as an opportunity "to give a message to the rest of the world that Turkey can undertake the restoration of a world-important building". The better message, however, would be to accept that knowledge and expertise have no frontiers. The best people should be called in to finish the job.

At the moment it is impossible to visit Küçük Ayasofya. The building is boarded up and there are guards at the gate. It is, after all, a building site and clearly it would be wrong to have visitors parading through. I did receive permission to see the site from the Istanbul Municipality and took along a well-respected Byzantine archaeologist, Alessandra Ricci, to inform my own non-expert impressions. What concerned the two of us was not that the building had become off limits but that the restoration was not taking place under the gaze of the international academic community. This project has been going on for over two years and there is not even a website or the smallest article in an architectural magazine. We can hope, but have no way of knowing for sure, that the current restoration project is not doing more harm than good. We have no way of knowing, either, whether important archaeological evidence about the construction of the building has been destroyed or properly evaluated.

The building has been stripped bare. Two metres of earth have been removed. This has been done under the supervision of the Istanbul Archeological Museum. But informally I learn that the relationship between builder and archaeologist has not gone smoothly. As far as I know, there has never been a Byzantine expert involved in any stage of the project. There are many questions architectural historians have about the building which will now never be answered. There are unhappy precedents. The restoration of the Theodosian land walls initiated in the 1980s, during the mayorship of Bedrettin Dalan, concealed or destroyed important archaeological evidence and, according to Alessandra Ricci, made the walls more, and not less, vulnerable to destruction by earthquake.

Mr Alper is clearly aware of the dangers that he faces, as well as the danger of doing nothing at all: "The moment you stabilise one element, you risk causing it to buckle somewhere else." The issue is not whether he has done his engineering properly – although it should be noted that there has been no detailed geological analysis of the soil, as one might expect – but whether he is getting the right advice. As Turkey moves into Europe and adopts European standards for environment, work safety and commercial transparency, it will have to manage its cultural heritage according to higher standards as well. And yet the opposite appears to be happening. Unesco, not the European Union, has issued the equivalent of football's yellow-card warning to Istanbul for its failure to preserve better the historical peninsula. As a result, the city risks seeing its most important cultural assets being removed from the Unesco protected list.

Küçük Ayasofya should have been approached as one would a rare, crumbling manuscript, not as an apartment building with a leaky roof.

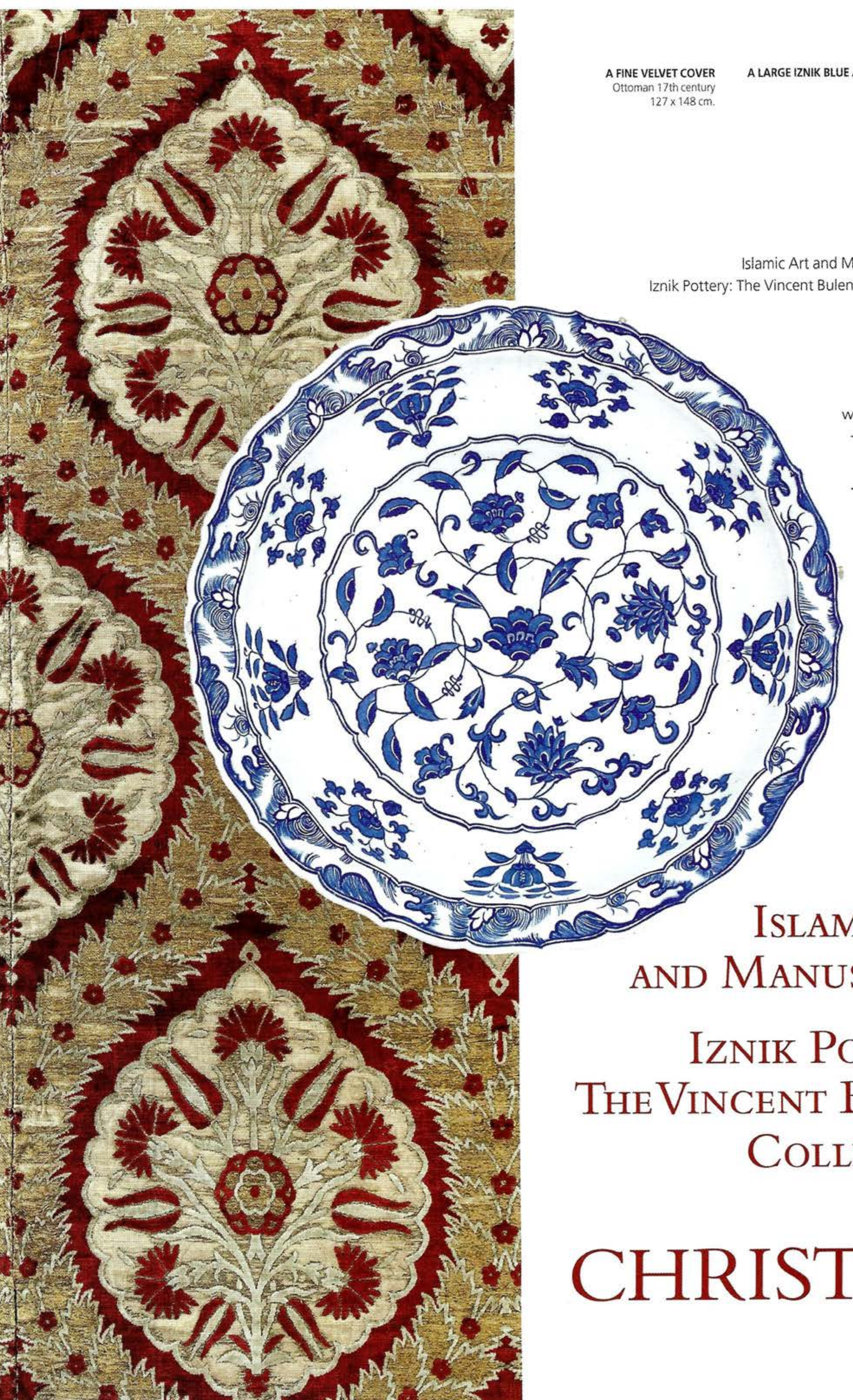
Who are these Turks?

The Turks may have failed at the gates of Vienna, but the conquest of London is nearly complete with the opening of a huge exhibition at one of that city's oldest and most important institutions for the fine arts. *Turks: A Journey of a Thousand Years, 600–1600* at the Royal Academy, to which many pages of this issue of CORNUCOPIA have been devoted, has become the must-see exhibition.

The RA exhibition on the Aztecs in 2002 helped promote Mexico into one of the top destinations for UK tourists. With Britain about to assume the presidency of the EU in the second half of 2005, the expectations riding on *Turks* is perhaps that much higher. Could it succeed not just in encouraging the British to take more holidays in Turkey but in expediting Turkey's entry into Europe, thus lifting the political barriers and visa restrictions which stop Turks from travelling in the opposite direction? "These are sensitive times," according to Akın Alptuna, Ankara's ambassador to London. Having at last wangled a starting date for EU entry negotiations, Turkey's missions to Europe are single-minded in courting public opinion in existing member states.

Europe, late in the day, thus finds itself engaged in a debate which has plagued the citizens of Istanbul and Ankara, Erzurum and Eskişehir for years – "Who are these Turks?" and "are they really European?". The scale of the current exhibition, the variety and importance of the objects on display, and the attention it has already attracted in the British press, promise to intensify that debate. Rethinking who the Turks were in history has accelerated a mutually reinforcing process of rethinking what Turkey is today. In a review of a recent book on Ottoman history for *The Daily Telegraph*, Noel Malcolm writes: "There is no other area of European history where our understanding of the past is now changing so dramatically, as so many of the old textbook certainties are questioned and dismantled."

For some commentators, the effort to rethink the stereotypes is grudging at best. "Base, despicable, maybe; bloody and ruthless, certainly; but the empire of Mehmet and his successors rivalled Byzantium for grandiosity and aspired to the glories of the Italian Renaissance,"



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ISLAMIC ART AND MANUSCRIPTS

IZNIK POTTERY: THE VINCENT BULENT COLLECTION

CHRISTIE'S
SINCE 1766

writes Michael Holledge in *The Times*. By implication he suggests that the fine objects in the exhibition are either the spoils of conquest or the ostentatious yearnings of parvenu civilisations.

Far more typical is the headline in *The Guardian* which reads: "The Ottoman empire was one of the mightiest the world has ever known. Can the Royal Academy's new exhibition do it justice?" In fact the point of the exhibition is to define the Turks not just in terms of the Ottomans but in a series of civilisations between 600 to 1600 and between China and the Balkans. An entire room is devoted to the display of the drawings catalogued in the Topkapı Palace under the name of Muhmmad Siyah Qalam but about which very little is known. They are vivid illustrations for stories that no longer exist of the demons and quarrels and the everyday life of the people of the Central Asian steppes. Who were these people? In a piece for the Royal Academy magazine, Orhan Pamuk pokes gentle fun at the Western exhibition-goer's need for certainty.

Inevitably the exhibition defines Turkishness in terms of the impressive objects which the curators have managed to borrow. The journey referred to in the title starts with the Uighurs, and continues with the Seljuks, the Timurids and the Ottomans. It does so with a certain innocence about the debates with which modern Turkey tortures itself over its own identity. Does Turkey have its roots in the migration of Turkic peoples from the steppes of Central Asia, or is there cultural continuity with the myriad civilisations of Anatolia? Is contact with Islamic civilisation the defining moment in being a Turk, or is it the contact with Western polities?

If the exhibition persuades people to consider that, whoever Turks are, they are not who they have been thought to be, then one purpose will have been achieved. Even so, if it does promote a view of Turkishness, it is of a people on the move. "There will be a lot of debate about the interaction of Turkish peoples with indigenous populations," said Norman Rosenthal, exhibitions secretary for the Royal Academy.

The Turks are a people who transform the populations whom they conquer but who are themselves transformed. Manzikert in 1071, Brussels tomorrow?

Will EU, won't EU, will EU join the dance?

Being on-message about Turkish-EU prospects these days calls for more than a touch of Zen. "The journey to Europe is more important than the destination," intoned Mustafa Koç, chairman of the mega-conglomerate that bears his family's name. On balance, this is less evidence of spiritual equanimity than a calculation that Turkish industry may stand to benefit more from the long run-up up to EU accession than after the country becomes a fully-paid up member of what is after all a costly club.

The country heaved a sigh last December when Brussels finally took the decision to set a date for accession talks. The hope is that this will quicken the pace of the virtuous cycle of reform and stability which Turkey has already entered. With interest rates falling, the dreaded row of noughts disappearing from a once-inflating currency, Turkey is a much more predictable place to do business. It is already attracting higher levels of foreign investment, which in turn produces faster growth, more jobs, increases Turkey's importance as a market for EU goods and services, and so hastens the accession process.

Of course, what Brussels decided was one of those sound-of-one-hand-clapping Euro-decisions which means both yes and no. Yes in the sense that Turkey now has another clear date on which to focus – October 3, 2005, when formal negotiations begin – and no in the sense that a handful of European countries remain reluctant to admit Turkey and have tried to install little mechanisms that could derail the accession process in the years ahead. This means Turkey begins talks with more uncertainty than either Ankara or the markets would really like.

The curious thing is that a group like Koç is now looking well beyond Europe to Russia as a source of growth. This may sound strange for a company that chases Vestel as Europe's largest television manufacturer and is its fifth-largest manufacturer of white goods. But for the first eleven months of 2004, Russian-Turkish trade was worth $9.4 billion, fifty percent more than in 2003. Mustafa Koç is also waiting for the take-off of the Iraqi and Syrian economies within the next ten years. After all, Turkey has little hope of being a member of the EU before 2015, or even 2020. By then Iran will be an enormous market, and Koç has great expectations from Ukraine. Of course, by Euro-logic, Turkish expertise in other parts of the globe only makes it a more attractive member.

The EU is a complex and querulous body and it has in the past displayed sometimes less than the sum of the collective wisdom of its foreign ministries. Yet it has succeeded beyond its own expectations in providing peace and prosperity within its own boundaries, and in expanding those frontiers to include countries in Eastern Europe which were once Brussels' foes. Those famous Copenhagen Criteria for membership, to which Turkey has laboured to adhere, have proven to be a remarkable charter for voluntary regime change. Yet it is obvious that sections of Europe worry that it is not Turkey that will be transformed but themselves. There is a fear of uncontrolled migration. Little do they know that Turkish business wants to maintain its competitive edge by keeping its workers at home.

There are those in Turkey, too, who would like to see a world of Us and Them, and who delight in the grudging nature of the European endorsement rather than seeing the conditions and qualifications as a typical EU compromise. The main argument for Turkish acceptance should be one of common vision as well as common sense. Hopefully Europe will continue to define itself not by whom it should exclude but by whom it can embrace. ◆

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Anatolian flatweave wool çuval, nineteenth century

RIDDLE OF THE RUNES

AFTER YEARS OF DELVING DEEP INTO THE ORIGINS OF WRITING AND LANGUAGE, KÂZIM MIRŞAN HAS PUT FORWARD AN ASTONISHING CLAIM: THAT AT THE ROOT OF IT ALL IS AN ANCIENT, PROTO-TURKISH MOTHER TONGUE. GENIUS OR DREAMER? CHRISTIAN TYLER MEETS A MAN WHOSE HYPOTHESES THREATEN TO TURN THE VERY HISTORY OF MAN ON ITS HEAD

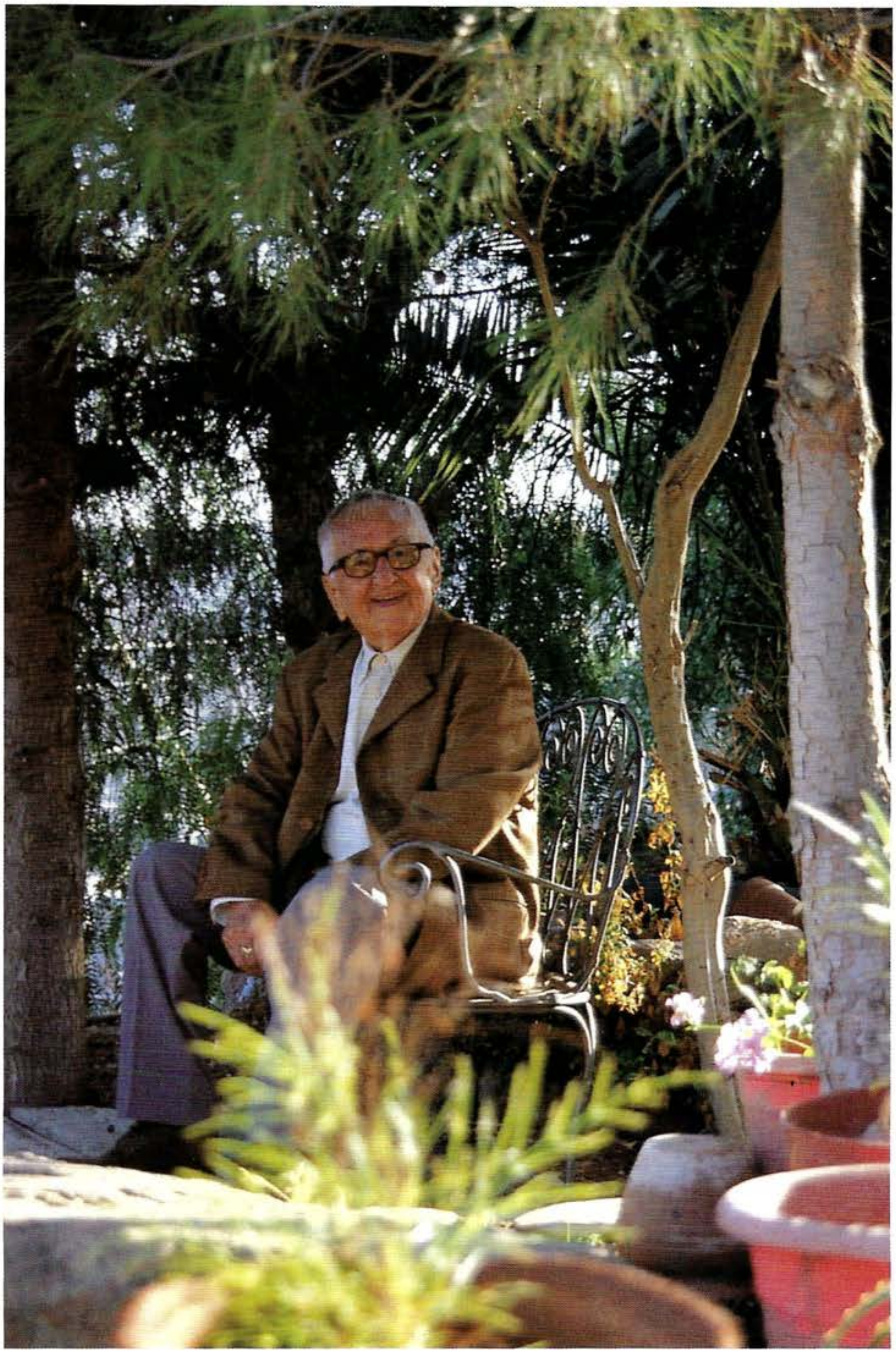
People love puzzles – brainteasers, crosswords, jigsaws and the rest. Our need to find a solution to every puzzle, a story to fit every mystery, is what turned us from apes into scientists. Few of us, however, would devote our lives to puzzle-solving in the way Kâzım Mirşan has done. Fewer still would dare claim the success that he does.

In Mirşan, an eighty-five-year-old Turkish civil engineer, the puzzle-solving passion has taken its loftiest form: a consuming fascination for ancient scripts. He began studying stone inscriptions in 1968, while working for the Krupp steel company in Germany. Over the ensuing thirty years he has put forward a succession of startling and controversial theories about the origins of writing and language, theories little known in Turkey and even less so outside.

His appearance on television in Turkey two summers ago, followed by three all-night studio debates, brought Mirşan some belated public recognition. But no academic expert appears yet to have tested his extraordinary claims.

These claims are based on two large hypotheses. The first hypothesis says that all scripts and alphabets derive from the same primitive source – scratch marks or cave paintings made 16,000 years ago. The second says that most of the languages we know today (at least in Eurasia) are derived in some way from the language that lies behind all those old scripts, a single mother tongue, or *Ursprache*. And this mother tongue, says Mirşan, is Turkish, or what he calls "proto-Turkish".

Mirşan's claims have disturbing consequences. He has to reject the long-accepted decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs advanced by Champollion. He rejects the famous decipherment of Minoan Linear B in the early 1950s. Where on Greek vases we read the names of Greek gods and



BERRIN TOROLSAN

goddesses, he reads instead messages in ancient Turkish. He dismisses the accepted rendition of the Etruscan alphabet, painfully acquired over many years. And his redecipherment of an Anglo-Saxon runic inscription found in the River Thames leads him to assert that the British came originally from somewhere called At-Il in the Ural Mountains.

"So you see, we are related!" he exclaims when I call on him at his house in Türkbükü, high up on the rocky northern edge of the Bodrum peninsula. Related, because Mirşan's family were Turkic people from Tyumen, just beyond the Urals in western Siberia. He himself, however, was born at Gulja in the northwest province of Xinjiang in China, where his parents, prosperous traders, had migrated after the Russian Revolution. After his father died, his grandfather paid for him to study in Istanbul.

Mirşan is, like his theories, somewhat larger than life. He gesticulates with a flourish, speaks with slow and heavy emphasis, and reacts strongly to objections. He publishes his findings in looseleaf pamphlets packed with illustrations. They are written in Turkish, German or English, but appear not to have benefited from any kind of peer review.

The key to his success, says their author, is his ancestry. Coming as he does from the land where the oldest Turkish is spoken, he has been able to discover the true meaning of all the inscriptions of Central Asia and Europe. Why, I ask him, cannot professional Turkologists in his own country see what he sees? "They can't understand the sense," he replied, "because modern Turkish is more like Greek than Old Turkish." As for Western scholars, he thinks most are too prejudiced to listen to him, secure in their conviction that their own results are "unquestionable and unchangeable".

Mirşan started his code-breaking career by attacking Siberian stone inscriptions. From there he moved on to Romanian, Portuguese and French. All, he found, were Turkish. His basis for attaching sounds to the signs he took from the Danish philologist Vilhelm Thomsen, whose decipherment of old Turkish inscriptions on the Orkhon river in Mongolia was one of the more spectacular feats of the nineteenth century. But he disagrees with Thomsen about the origin of the Turks' quasi-runic writing, and claims it is not from the eighth century AD, as Thomsen and others maintain, but more than a thousand years older. Mirşan's method of dating old stones, however, is not very clear – "a mathematical method similar to quantum mechanics" is how he explains it.

How does he know the ancient Britons started life as Turks? Because it is inscribed, he says, on a bronze amulet found in the Thames. According to the professor emeritus of Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge University, however, this and similar inscriptions are easily recognised as old German, written in a runic alphabet no older than the Roman Empire, and found in Scandinavia and Britain. Mirşan insists that these runes speak "proto-Turkish".

The original inhabitants of Anatolia, too, were "proto-Turks" – long before the Greeks, the Persians, the Lydians, Lycians, Carians and the rest. "Greek civilisation is Turkish civilisation," Mirşan declares with a triumphant laugh. They got their gods and their gods' names from the Turks. "Zeus", for instance, means nothing in Greek, but the letters of "Zeus" read to him as old Turki: *"Ozu Ichy"* or *"Ichoy Oz"*, meaning "man of the other world".

It is a controversial but not unattractive theory. However, many of his instances shake the reader's confidence. A Greek vase bears the word "*Kephalos*" above a painting of a goblin figure running after a dog, which in turn is chasing a fox. A Greek would instantly read this as the name of the mythical Attic hunter whom we write in English as "Cephalus". But Mirşan, persisting in seeing the script as Turki, not Greek, gets instead *"ïkiçiw ëtiliniz"*, which he translates into German as *"Paarung"*, or "mating".

The same determination to see proto-Turkish everywhere is inflicted upon that controversial people, the Etruscans – whom Mirşan, naturally, sees as Turks from Central Asia. Now, scholars agree that while the Etruscan language remains a mystery, for it has no known relative, its alphabet is borrowed from the Greeks (and through them from the Phoenicians). They know the sound of every letter and can read most of the thousands of funerary inscriptions left to us. A couple of these are "bilinguals", meaning that they have Roman translations beside them.

I showed Kâzım Mirşan a copy of one from a marble urn. The Etruscan says *"pup. velimna Au. cahatial"*, and the Latin *"P. Volumnius Af. Cafatia natus"*, which translates as "Publius Volumnius, son of Aulus, born of Cafatia". After studying the lines for some days, Mirşan sent me his version. Denying that the Roman and Etruscan could possibly be of the same date, he declared the "true" translation of the Etruscan to be: "After my death I flow across to be in cosmos as quantum."

Similarly obscure and cosmic translations crop up in much of Mirşan's work: from Scandinavia, through Anatolia, to Chinese Turkestan he discovers other vaguely intergalactic pronouncements. In the case of Uighur texts found in Turfan, western China, and published in 1965 by Professor Reshit Rahmeti Arat under the title *Old Turkic Poems*, his speculations become quite wild. These Turfan texts are not poems at all, says Mirşan, but much older Turkish – sixth-century BC – astronomical reports. Their title should instead read: *The Manipulation of Cosmic Invariances*. In other words, proto-Turks were practising cosmological physics long before Newton, Einstein and Max Planck. As for Mirşan's speculations about the Turkish origin of Christianity – indeed of all religions – and the death of Jesus in Trebizond in 514BC, the less said the better.

Some of the greatest discoveries in archaeology, some of the most miraculous decipherments – we think of Schliemann, the merchant, at Mycenae and Troy; Henry Rawlinson, the army officer who decoded cuneiform; or Michael Ventris, the architect, who jointly solved the riddle of Minoan Linear B – have been made by amateurs. The fact that Mirşan is an amateur should not, therefore, count against him. He may be wrong about some things; it does not follow that he is wrong about everything.

His theories about the origin of writing are fascinating, and his collation and comparison of inscriptions from across Eurasia – especially the similarities he finds between Anatolian and early Egyptian hieroglyphs – are intriguing. It is the translations which seem to let him down, being often woolly, repetitive and unconvincing, or downright implausible.

The Bodrum philologist does not bother with strict and scholarly presentation; nor is it always easy to understand just what he is claiming – the consequence, probably, of working too much in isolation. His work has few academic endorsements, and those are not reassuring. And yet, one cannot escape the feeling that Kâzım Mirşan is on to something. There are a hundred questions that need asking. But until and unless someone takes the trouble to ask them, we shall never know what – if anything – that something is.

◆

Christian Tyler is the author of *Wild West China: The Taming of Xinjiang* (John Murray, £20) – see book offers, page 32. Kâzım Mirşan's books and pamphlets are listed on his website, www.geocities.com/kazimmirsan/.

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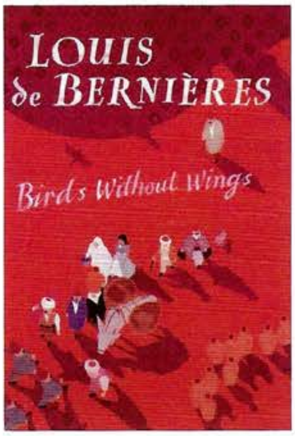
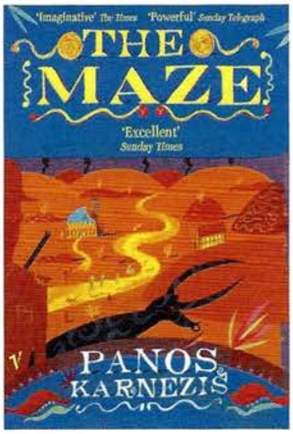
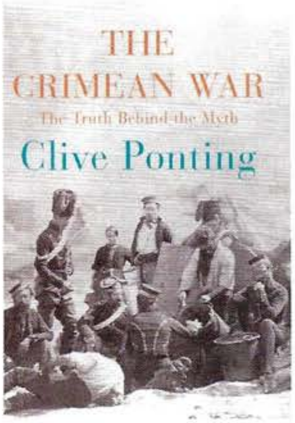
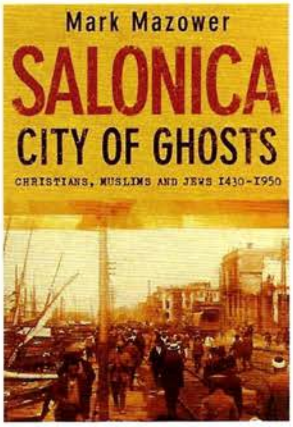








America must be the only country in the world where the word "loser" is an insult. Failure is generally rather more interesting than success, and the literature of defeat is certainly richer than that of victory: America herself displays this in the considerable quality of the historical literature about the Vietnam War. Here are two books about what happened to the Greeks of Anatolia at the end of the First World War. It is a horrible story, ending with the burning of the Greek quarter of Izmir (Smyrna) in September 1922 – at the time the most go-ahead city in the Levant.

For many decades and perhaps even generations the Greek version of events dominated the field, and not so long ago a motion only narrowly failed in the Athens parliament condemning the Turks for "genocide". The Greek version is, in its way, understandable, because the arrival in poor and war-torn mainland Greece of about 1,500,000 penniless Anatolian refugees was indeed a disaster. The second generation often became Communist. It was not a good thing for Turkey, either, since she lost people who knew how to make and organise things, to manage trade and to set up schools, at a time when the Muslim population was almost prevented from being literate because the Arabic script (with three vowels) in which Turkish (with eight vowels) was written was such an obstacle. Sensible Greeks (there were a great many) knew that they should not provoke the Turks. But the sensible ones, at the end of the First World War, were persuaded that the great British Empire would make them, once more, lords of Asia Minor. David Lloyd George, "the man who won the war" and who certainly won a landslide election at the end of it, clearly imagined he could do no wrong, and he egged on his Greek friends to invade Anatolia with a view to stopping the Italians. The Turks he wrote off as degenerates. Quite why British radical liberals took this view of the Turks is a good question: Gallipoli, after all, was fairly hard evidence in the other direction. Perhaps Lloyd George just thought British generals were incapable even of defeating Turks. At any rate, as Louis de Bernières says in his new novel about this subject, Lloyd George was the chief villain of the show.

The Greeks blundered in, did quite well militarily, for a time, and were finally held not far from Ankara in August 1921. A year later, the Turks counter-attacked, and the Greeks collapsed – the subject of Panos Karnezis's *Maze*. Its hero is an elderly general, leading his men through a waterless plain to a nameless little Greek–Turkish town not far from the sea. The general takes morphine, but somehow manages to keep control of his men, though his chief of staff is a Communist and there is a poor old muddled priest with delusions of grandeur in a disused church that fills up with the corpses of rats when the crypts are flooded in a storm.

The novel ends with the Christian population moving out, down to the sea, and no doubt a bleak future in that quarter of Athens called Nea Smyrna. There is an Anatolian Institute in Athens which publishes very decent books about it all, and apparently has tape-recordings of life as it once was. If you know about these matters, Karnezis's book will make sense of an afternoon in an armchair.

Louis de Bernières has established himself so well in London letters that his silence as a novelist for ten years provoked some comment. On the whole, British reviewers (though not others) were rather puzzled by the present book, and *The Economist*'s reviewer wondered about the ten years' silence (relative: there has been a good little introduction to

Not just any old iron

By Caroline Finkel

Balconies of Istanbul
By Oya Şengör and
Sheree Barka
Çitlembik, Istanbul, YTL59

Strolling around Istanbul, it pays to keep your eyes on your feet. Too great a fascination with one's surroundings – at the expense of keeping a beady eye on the pavement in case of unexpected potholes – can prove a painful mistake. But *Balconies of Istanbul* is just the book to tip the balance between a desire for self-preservation and enjoyment of one's surroundings in favour of the latter. For the rewards of looking around are rich. The lament for the speed at which the fabric of Istanbul is disappearing – despite a panoply of regulations designed to protect it from the wrecker's ball – is unanimous. And the city's balconies are an integral part of this fabric.

The glorious colour photographs in *Balconies of Istanbul* record more than 120 such architectural gems, in materials from stone and concrete to wood and iron, and in styles from Art Nouveau to Art Deco, utilitarian to fantastic. The buildings they grace range from the well known, such as the imposing Botter Han on Istiklal Caddesi, to the modest domestic façades of houses in the city's side streets. Published in both Turkish and English, this handsome paean to an aspect of Istanbul that is disappearing before our eyes is a book with a mission: to raise awareness of what is lost and what remains – but can yet be saved given a change in attitude. Since these photographs were taken, some of these balconies have been destroyed. Others have been deformed, such as one outside a restaurant whose intricate ironwork is wreathed in plastic ivy – apparently the clientele prefer it. Changing attitudes is no easy task, but you have to start somewhere. Istanbul's doors, it seems, will get the treatment next.

Meşrutiyet Caddesi 126, Beyoğlu

Çankaya Caddesi 26, Büyükada

Mis Sokak 5, Beyoğlu

The Book of Job in a series of such biblical introductions). On the evidence of *Birds Without Wings* the reason is obvious: de Bernières has done an enormous amount of work in what cannot have been, for an outsider, familiar or easy territory.

There are some very good books in English about the Anatolian disaster – Michael Llewellyn-Smith's *Ionian Vision* (1973) the most obvious – but de Bernières has obviously carried out research of an extremely high order. This reviewer has not done so badly himself, and takes his hat off to a prodigious amount of work, as to how those Greek–Turkish places lived in the days when everyone was an Ottoman subject. In Ürgüp in Cappadocia there is an inscription in Turkish, in Greek letters, above a hamam in the middle of the town, which must have its tales to tell; in neighbouring Sinasos (now "Mustafapaşa" – a pity the Turks were unimaginative when it came to changing the names of the places) an enterprising Greek–French television team brought back the old, old people from both sides to reminisce. De Bernières has a horrible story to tell.

The book is set in a mixed Greek–Muslim town on the Mediterranean coast of Asia Minor, before, during and after the First World War. They get along, *tant bien que mal*, but have been together for centuries (Anna Comnena, early in the twelfth century, divided the Anatolian population into Greeks, barbarians, and *mixovarvaroi*). It deals with episodes that would have been characteristic of the times. For instance, a Greek girl falls in love with a Turkish boy – and if life had been as it had been in 1890, they no doubt would simply have got married, she making the sort of conversion that would have kept her in touch with her family, as had happened with St Mary of the Mongols centuries before. There are Greek and Turkish boys playing together, the Greek boy teaching the Turkish friend to write, but with Greek letters. The Greek boy, drafted into a labour battalion, deserts and becomes a bandit; the Turk becomes the best sniper at Gallipoli. They meet at the very end, the Greek to begin a new life on Rhodes, with help from the Turk.

There are other episodes showing how well de Bernières has studied the period, some of them quite cruel, as with the fate of the Bey's adulterous Turkish wife, whose life is saved (from gleeful public stoning) by the *imam* and a Greek woman, but who has no other future than the brothel, syphilis, dead children. (A false note in the novel is the Bey's sentimental return, which does not make sense.)

Through it all is the sense of insane public events that have their own logic crowding in and destroying private arrangements of all sorts. Two reminiscences of Captain Corelli: a good-guy Italian officer (the Italians were the most understanding of the Western occupiers), who has his Turkish friend and absorbs the local ways, and a local Greek, who manages to take his boat, and his wife, as far as Cephalonia, and fathers a son who appears as the villainous Communist of the Greek Civil War in Captain Corelli.

There is a silly, romantic Greek-nationalist schoolmaster, making trouble; there is a love-affair, destroyed by events; there is, *War and Peace* coming to mind, the intrusion of high politics. De Bernières takes two roads to these. One is the experience of a simple Turk at Gallipoli, and as the author is himself a military man, that is very ably handled indeed: Lord knows how the Turks managed to survive that British onslaught, but they did, and Lloyd George should have learned his lesson from that.

The other is an account of the doings of Kemal Atatürk, as he understood how he could deal with the British, the Sultan, the Kurds, the Bolsheviks, the Armenians, the French. That part is handled extraordinarily well. The key to Atatürk's success was his handling of the Bolsheviks, and you might even claim that he and De Gaulle were the only two European statesmen who managed to deal with the Bolsheviks from a position of weakness and win. Atatürk even understood quite early on that if you wanted to deal with Communists, you set up a party of them that you could control: otherwise their verminous habits in committees would beat you. Whatever the case, Atatürk, from a De Gaulle-like position of weakness, managed to set his enemies against each other. De Gaulle maintained in his entourage a man, d'Astier de la Vigerie, who, he knew, reported to Stalin. He played up his quarrels with Macmillan (who seems to have understood what was going on) and got the French Communists to support him. That gave him the strength to face down Roosevelt. Then he squashed the Communists. Atatürk had qualities of that order and, though some reviewers have not appreciated what de Bernières was trying to do, he deserves credit.

Lloyd George does not. He was, for the mainland Greeks, the great man, and Greeks of high intelligence in London, with all their connections and charm, supposed that they could restore Byzantium. The father of the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Andrew, was commander of a division, marching towards Ankara (a decent man, they sacked him: he says in his memoirs that he could not imagine human beings, let alone Greeks, behaving as atrociously as his men did). March and march and march, across that dry stretch east of Eskişehir, water running short, dysentery, flu destroying the army, some veiled old women to push around contemptuously in Yalova, the Greeks of Pera showing, just where the monument to Turkey's War of Independence is in Taksim, a gigantic picture of Venizelos. Then disaster: the tidal wave engulfing de Bernières' villagers, and, as he ends, the great port of Smyrna. A horrible story, well told. Very.

Crimean punishment

By David Barchard

The Crimean War
By Clive Ponting
Chatto & Windus, £20

The Crimean War, fought from 1853 to 1856 between Britain, France, Turkey and Sardinia on one side and Russia on the other, was the first "modern" war and, for the ordinary soldiers in it, among the most horrible. For Turkey the war's outcome, as laid down at the Peace of Paris in 1856, was largely benign. If it had not been for the war, Russia would probably have partitioned the Ottoman Empire early on. As a result of it, Turkey was admitted to the loose club of European nations known as the Concert of Europe. However, the Congress of Paris gave the Great Powers legal rights to interfere in Turkish affairs to protect the Empire's Christian population. These were eventually used to reduce Turkey to the status of a virtual protectorate by the later nineteenth century, and to amputate most of its territories in Europe by 1914.

Clive Ponting's focus in this book is mainly on the Crimean War as a Great-Power conflict. He argues that it left a doubly unfortunate legacy for Britain and Europe. After the Crimea, Britain turned its back on European disputes and forgot it was a European power with interests in the continent. It also forgot it needed a major army and relied too heavily on the navy that enabled it to acquire and hold together its vast worldwide empire.

Ponting is a former civil servant who left the British Ministry of Defence in a blaze of notoriety in 1982. He had been charged with breaking the Official Secrets Act at the time of the Falklands War, after tangling with Margaret Thatcher's government over the sinking of an Argentine warship. He has since become a distinguished academic historian and prolific author. This is his fourteenth book in just over two decades. Ponting specialises in attacking the "comforting mythology" surrounding hallowed topics.

Where the Crimean War is concerned, debunking legends is not easy, since the main stories told about it have all been about the blunders and incompetence of British ministers and generals. These were angrily catalogued in the newspapers while the war was being fought – even if, as Ponting shows, it sometimes took a while for the bad news to get out in full and journalists were creepily conventional in their coverage. Junior officers in the British army in the Crimea could see perfectly well that their commander, Lord Raglan, was incompetent to the point of wickedness. One of them, "Chinese" Gordon, the future Gordon of Khartoum, stationed in the Ottoman Balkans in the 1860s, would spend his evenings impressing his Ottoman official friends such as Ismail Kemal Bey with tales of Raglan's shocking hopelessness. "[Lord Raglan even] once made the mistake of confusing his own army with that of the enemy," Ismail Kemal recalls in his memoirs.

From the outset of the war, it was clear the British were much less competent at almost every aspect of warfare management than their French – and indeed sometimes their Turkish – allies. Ponting writes in an unaffected, rather staccato style. At his best, his judgments shoot out with a crisp, stark lucidity. A masterly final chapter on the impact of the war spells out its impact on the mid-nineteenth-century international system set up after Waterloo.

But a good deal of the time what comes through is an understated, rather puritanical, disapproval. Florence Nightingale and her work are predictably bashed, largely because Ponting cannot resist going for a middle-class icon. The point, surely, is that, for all her failures, she is still a landmark for a real change in the history of medical care, even if she did take credit for the work of many other people.

Opportunities a historian like Gibbon would have seized upon with relish, in order to delight his readers with irony, sarcasm and caustic jokes, flash past Ponting unseized. For example, he drily reports that at the outbreak of war, the 79-year-old Lord Dundonald offered to head the fleet but was rejected because the cabinet thought him on the verge of insanity. That does no justice to the reality. Lord Dundonald is better known as Sir Thomas Cochrane, one of the most extraordinary, though eccentric sailors Britain ever produced and the real-life prototype of Patrick O'Brian's Jack Aubrey.

Equally, Ponting sounds disgusted rather than amused when the British navy makes a fool of itself at the far end of the world, storming a remote settlement on the island of Sakhalin – which proves to harbour nothing more lethal than a Russian archbishop – and then blaming the fiendish cunning of Russian map-makers for its navigational errors. Yet this incident also reveals Ponting's characteristic strength in being able to see the overall global picture very clearly. For him the Crimean War was a sort of embryonic world war, and it is significant that there were botched attempts to fight the war across the world in the Baltic and the Sea of Japan as well as the Crimea.

His sympathies are with the "marginalised", but only as conventionally defined in the early twenty-first century. In the Crimea this means working-class soldiers who suffer and die in freezing weather while their officers are comfortably billeted nearby. Like his Victorian liberal predecessors, he notes the plight of Christian nationalities in the Ottoman Empire but fails to give the Tanzimat statesmen the credit they are owed for a serious attempt to create a multicultural political community. Crimean Tartars, and their hopes of liberation, are mentioned, but without coming into focus as the casualties of imperialist expansion.

At the end of the war, 650,000 men were dead, three-quarters of them Russians. Despite their apparent superiority, the French lost 95,000 soldiers, but Britain only 22,000 – and only 4,000 of them killed through direct military action rather than illness or cold. Turkish deaths were possibly 50,000. It is a sombre story, and this version of it, at least, will leave no one with any impulse to celebrate the war's 150th anniversary.

The city that haunts itself

BY ANDREW MANGO

Salonica: City of Ghosts,
Christians, Muslims and Jews
1430–1950
By Mark Mazower
HarperCollins, £25

I grew up in Teşvikiye, a neighbourhood in Istanbul favoured by refugees from Ottoman Salonica. Işık Lisesi, across the road from our flat, and Şişli Terakki Lisesi, the best Turkish private schools at the time, both traced their origins to Şemsi Efendi, the pioneer of modern education for Muslims in Salonica, whose primary school counted Mustafa (Kemal Atatürk) among its pupils. One of my friends at the English High School was a Sephardic Jew from a distinguished Salonica family who, as he explained to me later, had "come to Istanbul with the French" – in other words, with the French army based in Salonica, which had moved to occupy Istanbul at the end of the First World War. This did not stop my friend's father from becoming Atatürk's technical adviser in the construction of the Merinos wool mill in Bursa. During the Second World War, when the French-language daily *Istanbul* (originally *Stamboul*) became an organ of Vichy propaganda, the Allied cause was defended by *Journal d'Orient*, owned by the Karasu (originally Carasso) Sephardic family from Salonica, whose most illustrious member, Emmanuel Carasso, had been a prominent and influential Young Turk before and after the revolution of 1908. The Banque de Salonique (Selânik Bankası) did good business from its office in Galata. Ottoman Salonica lived on in the republic founded by that city's most famous son.

Ottoman Salonica is the ghost behind the modern city of Thessaloniki in Mark Mazower's history, which is subtitled *Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430–1950*, although it also covers briefly the city's Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine antiquity.

Mazower, a historian of modern Greece, has specialised in laying bare the reality behind nationalist myths and, more generally, the bloody past of the fraternal European Union, notably in his *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*, published in 2000. He writes well, in full command of his rich material, and in tune with the rising tendency of rediscovering the merits of imperial government.

Like all imperial cities, Ottoman Salonica was multi-ethnic and multi-confessional. But it was exceptional in one respect: since the sixteenth century the majority of its inhabitants (the largest "element", in the political terminology of the nineteenth century) had been Jews – descendants of the Sephardim expelled from Spain, joined by others who had journeyed by way of Leghorn and elsewhere in southern Europe (known as Francos), and later by Ashkenazim from E1astern Europe. Bearers of skills in which the Ottoman state was deficient, they also propagated new ideas, often in spite of the opposition of conservative rabbinical authorities: the ideology of European Enlightenment, freemasonry, and finally socialism. But it was a product of the Enlightenment – the ideology of nationalism – that destroyed the Jewish community of Salonica. The nationalism of the new Balkan states deprived them of Ottoman protection, and impoverished them; then the barbarous German nationalism of the Nazis exterminated them. The influential community of *dönme* (for whom Mazower uses the obsolete Salonica name of Ma'min), descendants of Jewish converts to Islam, were lucky to have been included as Muslims in the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey agreed at Lausanne in 1923. Going to Turkey, where many had already migrated (as had some Jews) when Salonica fell to the Greeks in 1912, they rebuilt their prosperity there.

Mazower's rich narrative makes it clear that the Tanzimat – nineteenth-century reforms which many Europeans decried as superficial and inadequate – ushered in the golden era of Ottoman Salonica, whose prosperity did not revive until after the Second World War. As recent scholarship has demonstrated (notably Justin McCarthy's comparison of late Ottoman and post-Ottoman Syria and Palestine), the Ottoman state was never administered so effectively – better than its successor states in their initial stages – as on the eve of its dissolution. True, there was poverty, dirt and disease amidst the rising prosperity of late Ottoman

Salonica. The great fire of 1917 destroyed many slums, as well as well-ordered neighbourhoods, and made it easier to rebuild the city along modern lines. But, as Mazower's city history shows, there had always been troubles – epidemics, disorder, corruption, banditry in the hinterland. The Tanzimat reduced their incidence.

Generous in its treatment of the Ottoman past, sorrowful at the disappearance of its legacy, Mazower's justly praised book suffers nevertheless from the fact that he is a specialist in Greek and not (or rather not also) in Turkish history. Turkish names and terms occur in a variety of inconsistent spellings – modern Turkish, contemporary European, transliterated Greek – or misspellings (such as Taksin for Tahsin Paşa, the Ottoman commander who surrendered Salonica to the Greeks). The author's unfamiliarity with Islamic history shows in his description of all Sufi orders as heterodox, a term which applies to the Bektaşi, but not to the rigidly orthodox Nakşibendi.

A key document – the report by an Ottoman judge (*molla*, which was a senior rank in the hierarchy of *kadıs*) on the retribution visited on the Salonica Greeks for the Greek revolt in 1821 – is quoted from a Greek translation. In a scrupulously annotated book, there is no source for the claim that "Kemalist forces massacred thirty thousand Greeks and Armenians in cold blood" when the Turkish army entered Izmir in September 1922. Mazower rightly stresses the suffering which attended the vast movements of populations when nation states were carved out of the Ottoman empire. But while there is no other word but "genocide" to describe the extermination of Jews by the Nazis, is he being fair in speaking of a genocide of the Armenians and not of the Muslims who fled or were deported from their homes and were decimated by massacre and disease?

In any case, the lesson of both the glories and the horrors so graphically described by Mazower is that care is needed to reap the benefits of intercommunal and international peace. Between Greeks and Turks there is now a new spirit of impartial enquiry to serve the cause of reconciliation. The Ottoman past is no longer a taboo subject in Greece, nor the Greek legacy in Turkey. Descendants of refugees are exchanging visits. Outside the two countries, a novel like Louis de Bernières' *Birds Without Wings*, with all its improbabilities, draws attention, however clumsily, to a shared heritage which can enrich all the parties to past disputes.

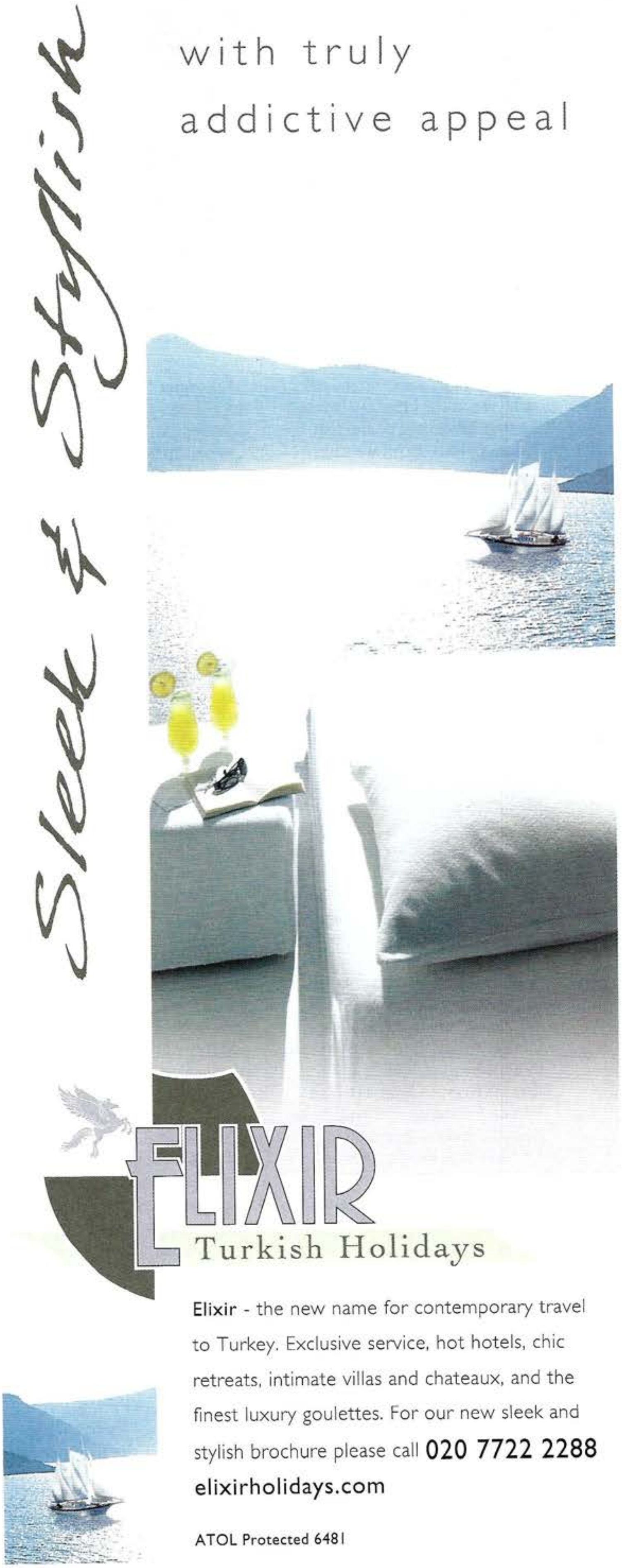
Mark Mazower's rewarding book whets one's appetite for more academic studies – on the links and the similarities between Salonica/Thessaloniki and Smyrna/İzmir, for example. Sabbatai Zevi, whose conversion to Islam lies at the roots of the *dönme* community, was a rabbi in Smyrna before moving on to Salonica. It was because the Greek navy prevented the despatch of reinforcements from Smyrna that Salonica fell to the Greeks in 1912. But as we wait for further studies, we must be grateful for the work that Mazower has done. *Salonica: City of Ghosts* deserves the praise it has already earned.

In search of sun and tea

BY HUGH POPE

Turkey: Bright Sun, Strong Tea
By Tom Brosnahan
Homer Kitabevi, Istanbul, YTL18

The owners of Homer Bookshop, just down Yeni Çarşı street from Galatasaray, make it a point of honour to keep in stock every book on Turkey they can. Now they have gone one better. Following my gaze towards an unfamiliar volume on the counter, the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co-owner, Ahmet Salcan, slipped a paperback into my bag of purchases. "Just published it," he said, with an impish smile. "The text came in and I put it out. It read so smoothly, I couldn't resist."

He is right, mostly. The author of this unusual volume is an unstoppable pro, the man behind three-dozen guidebooks, from places as varied as Guatemala and New England. Tom Brosnahan has now crafted a charming, witty personal memoir of exactly what Turkey was like in the late 1960s when he first broke out of English teaching into travel writing.

After a touching portrait of Izmir – from classes with idealistic students to the last aromas of the Ottoman Empire in the tobacco warehouse of a Levantine trader – Brosnahan sets off to scour Turkey for remote Seljuk tombs and the perfect glass of tea. He was one of the first modern travellers through Anatolian villages, and tales tumble from the page as he faces everything from furious "get-lost" suspicion to overwhelming hospitality. He was even on the sidelines of the very first business congress in Istanbul – the setting for a now long-forgotten outrage of Turkish press freedom, when papers gleefully published pictures of the fat cats' wives naked in the hamam.

Brosnahan also pays tribute to the dedication of the 1,500 US Peace Corps volunteers, of whom he was one, who served in Turkey after 1962. Though threats from radical Turkish leftists forced an end to this enlightened programme in 1970, it did, he reminds us, build an enduring cultural bridge between Turkey and America. It also launched the career of a guidebook-writer whose Lonely Planet guide has led countless visitors to Turkey's farthest corners. ◆

Tom Brosnahan's website, www.turkeytravelplanner.com, is also recommended for instant travel information on Turkey.

The books reviewed in this issue are available post-free to subscribers from our website, www.cornucopia.net

MUSIC

Colours in harmony

By Ateş Orga

Muammer Sun: *Yurt Renkleri.*
Hande Dalkılıç, piano.
Kalan Müzik CD 305

Muammer Sun, born in 1932, was professor of composition at Ankara State Conservatory until 1997. He studied with Adnan Saygun of the Turkish Five, the pianist Mithat Fenmen, and Kemal İlerici, harmonic pioneer of the Republic in the early 1940s.

Yurt Renkleri (Country Colours) comprises twenty-five pieces, divided into four books and composed over a thirty-year period between 1953 and 1983. Following İlerici, the music "equal tempers" traditional Turkish *makam* patterns, using a harmonic system built on intervals of a fourth (as distinct from European thirds).

The composer, anxious to stress that the result should not be considered a "synthesis of Turkish and Western music", claims that in his melodies and irregular rhythms the "joy and sorrow, sadness and vigour, lament and uplifting of the Anatolian people find shape".

Consistently effective and pianistically rewarding, this well-crafted, imaginative cycle – which anticipates some of the Mediterraneanised Maltese/Levantine/African music of Charles Camilleriis – is well worth investigating.

The pianist Hande Dalkılıç, a protégé of Ersin Onay at the Faculty of Music and Performing Arts at Bilkent University, plays with vigour and detail.

Do be warned, though: neither the closely balanced recording nor the tuning of the instrument is exactly flattering.

Hande Dalkılıç
piyano / piano
Muammer Sun
Yurt Renkleri
Country Colors
KALAN

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Concertos pour piano
Jean-Philippe COLLARD

Deniz Kızı
Eftalya
Kadıköylü

Sancan: Piano Concerto;
Tchaikovsky: Piano Concerto No 1.
Jean-Philippe Collard, piano.
Bilkent Symphony Orchestra (Emil Tabakov).
EMI Classics 7243 5 57800 2 7

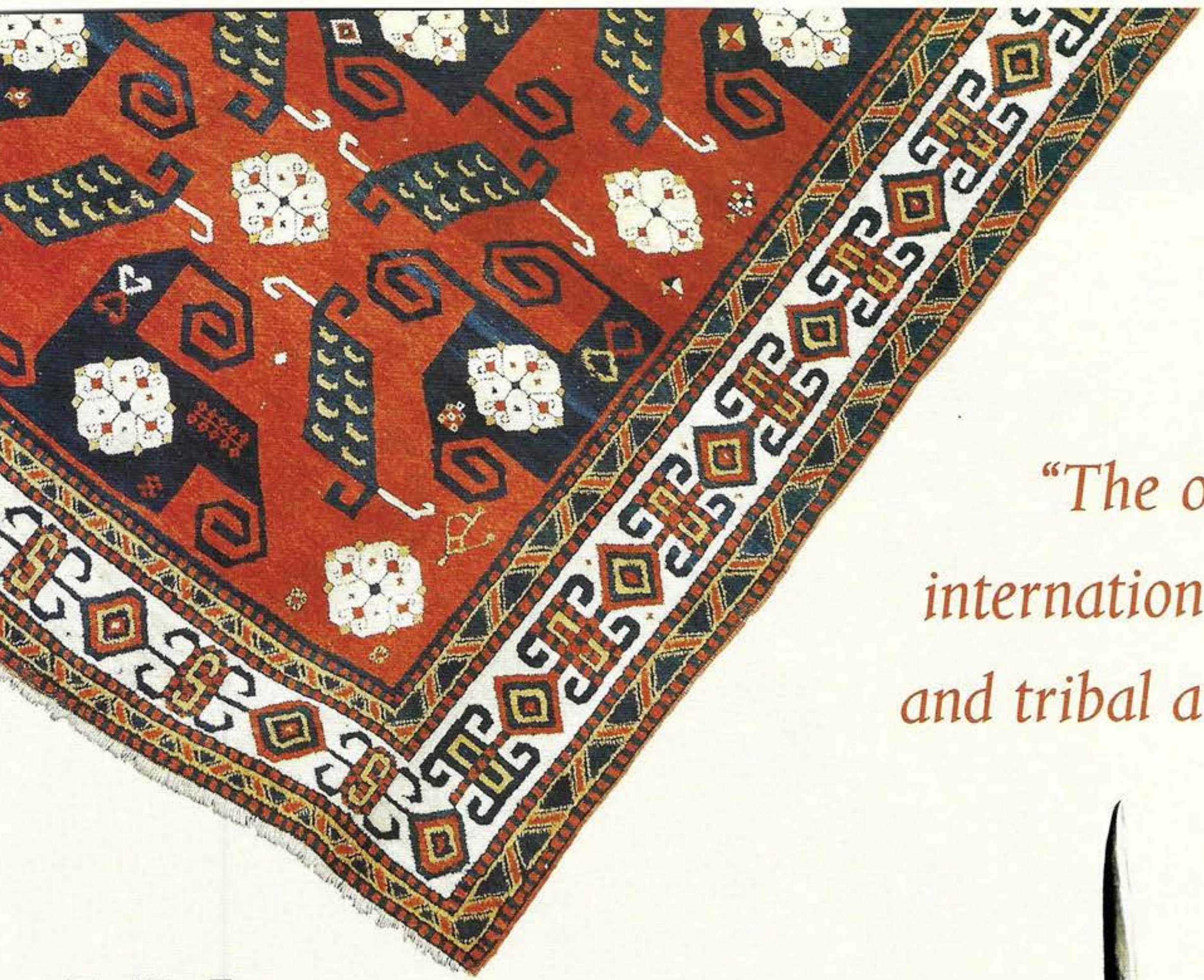
Two three-movement piano concertos, one so famous it needs no introduction, the other so good you wonder at its neglect. Pierre Sancan, born in 1916, studied with the pianist Yves Nats and succeeded him at the Paris Conservatoire. His concerto (1947–55) is a bold creation of refined colours and bright pianism, comfortably standing comparison with Ravel. Jean-Philippe Collard, who as a young man worked privately with the composer, gives a showcase account.

His back-to-square-one approach to the Tchaikovsky – a thirty-seven-minute account at speeds few pianists would risk easily – improves on repeated listening, even if the odd question-mark remains. The playing is clean and tight; the famous moments are dramatic; sentimentality doesn't enter the equation; and the structure is disciplined. Under their Bulgarian music director, Emil Tabakov, the Bilkent Symphony Orchestra excel throughout.

Kadıköylü.
Deniz Kızı Eftalya, chanteuse.
Kalan Müzik CD 0897

A magical window on the times and sounds bridging Empire and Republic, *Kadıköylü* celebrates the chanteuse Deniz Kızı Eftalya (1891–1939). Legend has it that as a girl this siren of the Ottoman Bosphorus would go out in a caique with her Greek-born father, singing away the summer evenings. No one ever saw her – but her songs echoing across the waters off Büyükdere on the way to Sarıyer were there for all to hear. "*Deniz Kızı*", they would say, "the Mermaid". Gifted with natural beauty and a voice of velvet, Eftalya made her early reputation in the waterside cafés of Galata during the Occupation years (1918–23). She subsequently recorded for Pathé, Columbia and other labels, leaving a legacy of 78s remarkable for their tonal sweetness, seductive phrasing and clarity of diction.

Ranging from new material on old *makams* to urban and rural songs from as far east as Erzurum, nothing is more haunting than *Kaçsam Bırakıp*, written by one Mehveş Hanım, or *Leyla*, *kemence* accompanied by the faded piano of Yorgo Bacanos. On some of the tracks she is joined by her husband, the violinist Sadi Bey (Işılay) – who survived her by thirty years. ◆



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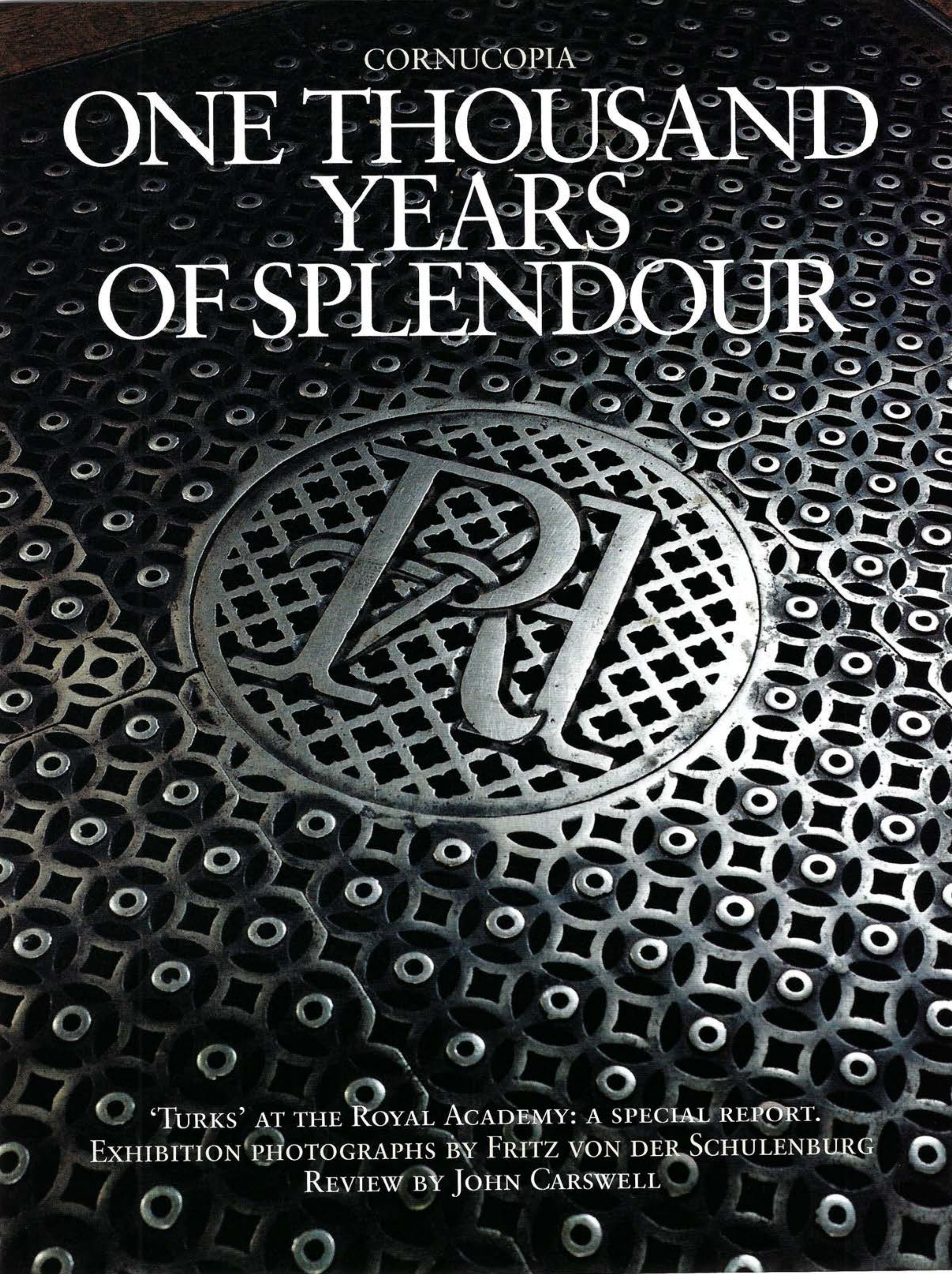
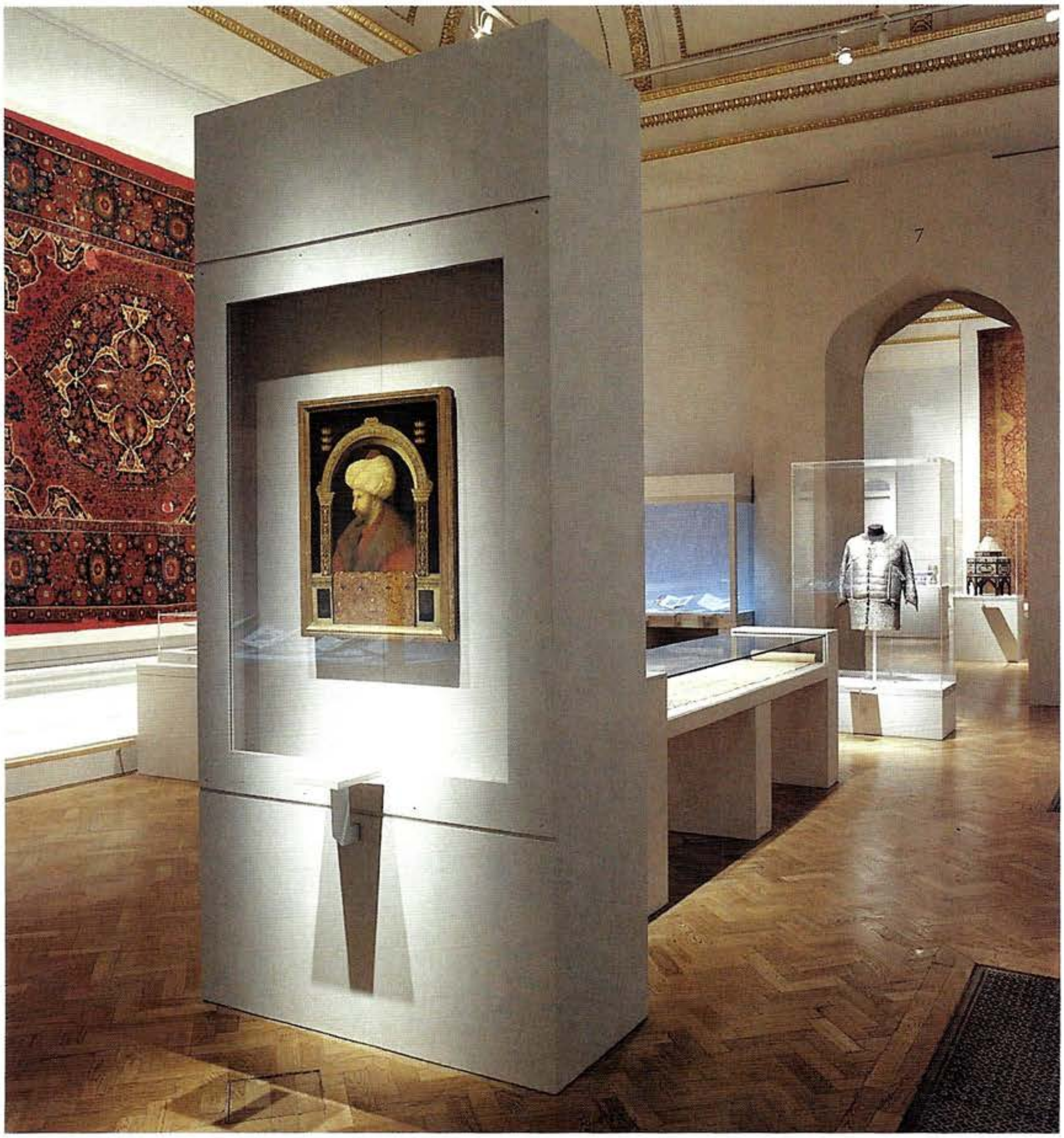


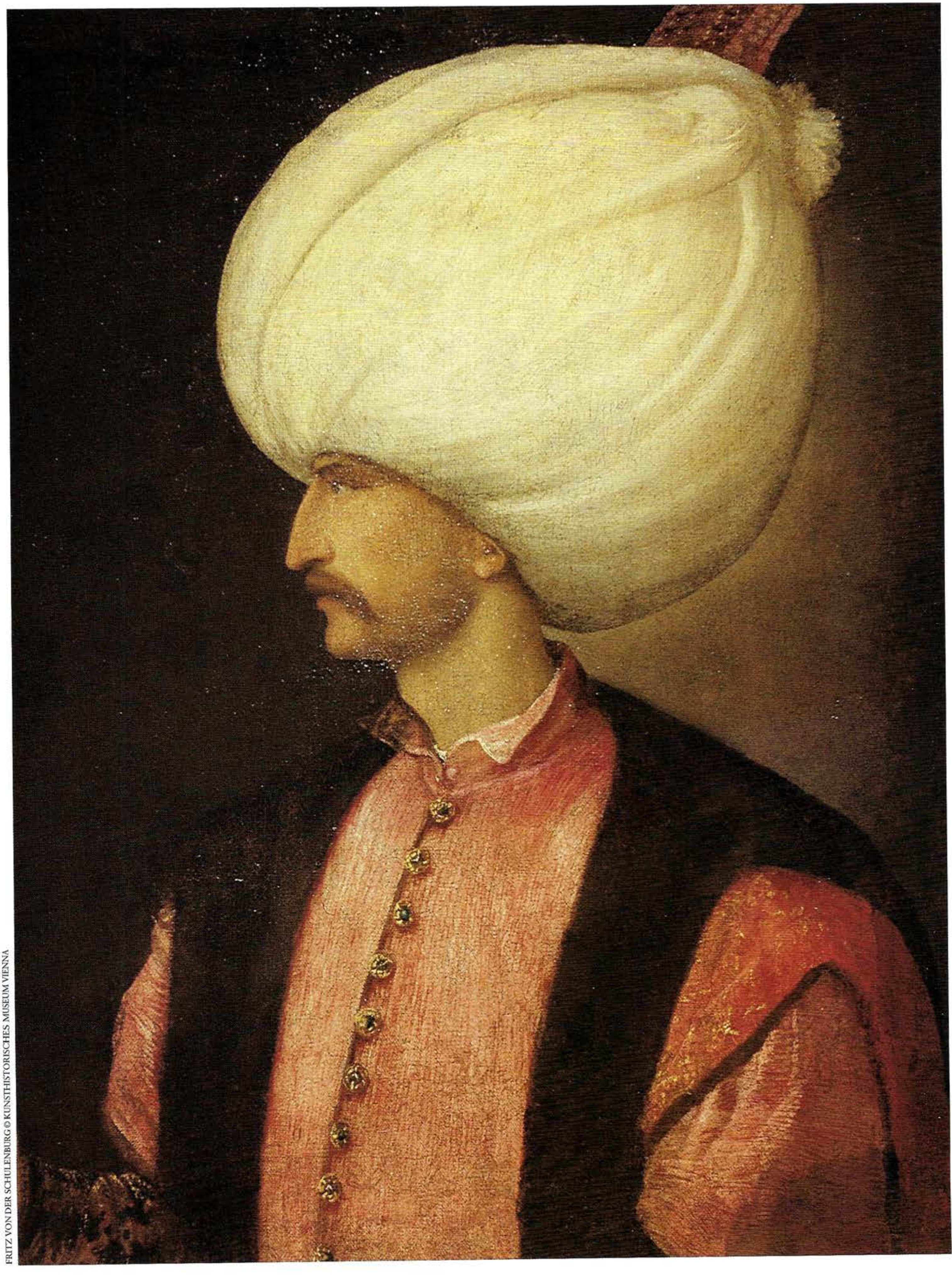
'TURKS' AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY: A SPECIAL REPORT.
EXHIBITION PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRITZ VON DER SCHULENBURG
REVIEW BY JOHN CARSWELL

'Turks: A Journey of a Thousand Years, 600–1600' opened at the Royal Academy at the start of 2005 to great acclaim. The Ottoman exhibits, many of them never before seen outside Turkey, are a glorious marriage of refinement and splendour. But 'Turks' is about more than the Ottomans. It celebrates the art of three great Turkic empires: that of the Seljuks, who ruled Persia and most of Anatolia; that of Tamerlane, based in Samarkand, which stretched from India to the Mediterranean; and the Ottoman Empire itself. Central Asia has had a profound influence on Western culture that has been ignored for too long. 'Turks' is set to change all that. CORNUCOPIA devotes 25 pages to the show; John Carswell's review is on page 48

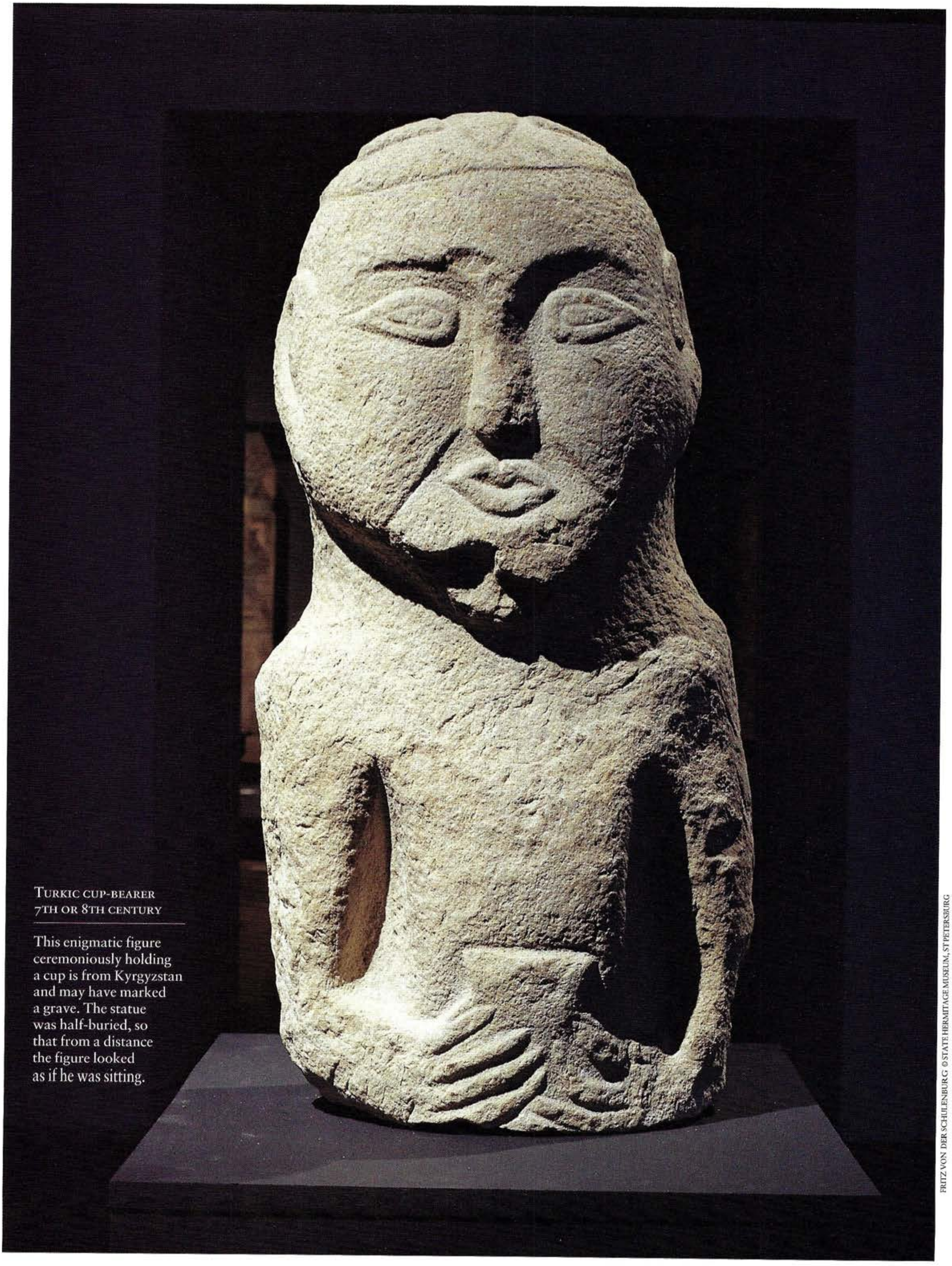


UTTERLY OTTOMAN

Left: Gentile Bellini's portrait of Mehmet the Conqueror painted in 1480, the year after he went to work for the enlightened sultan, makes a sensational start to a gallery that also includes Mehmet's personal sketchbook, with his childish caricatures. Opposite: a likeness of Süleyman the Magnificent (1492–1566) in the manner of Titian neatly captures the Sultan's very Ottoman profile



FRITZ VON DER SCHULENBURG © KUNSTHISTORISCHES MUSEUM VIENNA



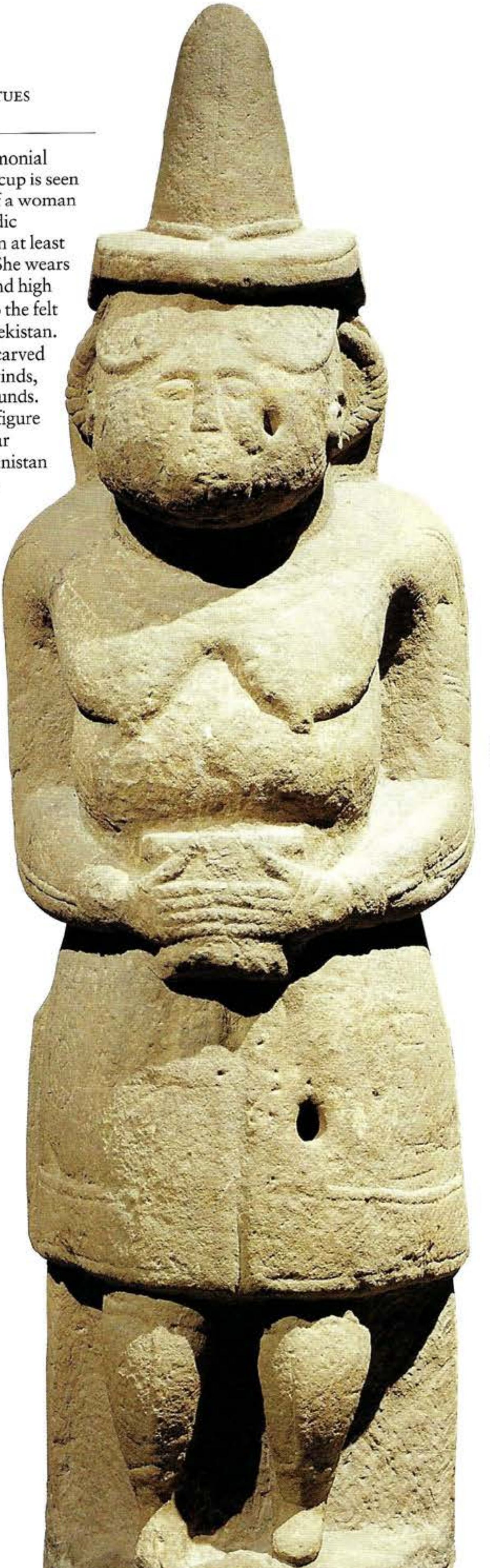
TURKIC CUP-BEARER
7TH OR 8TH CENTURY

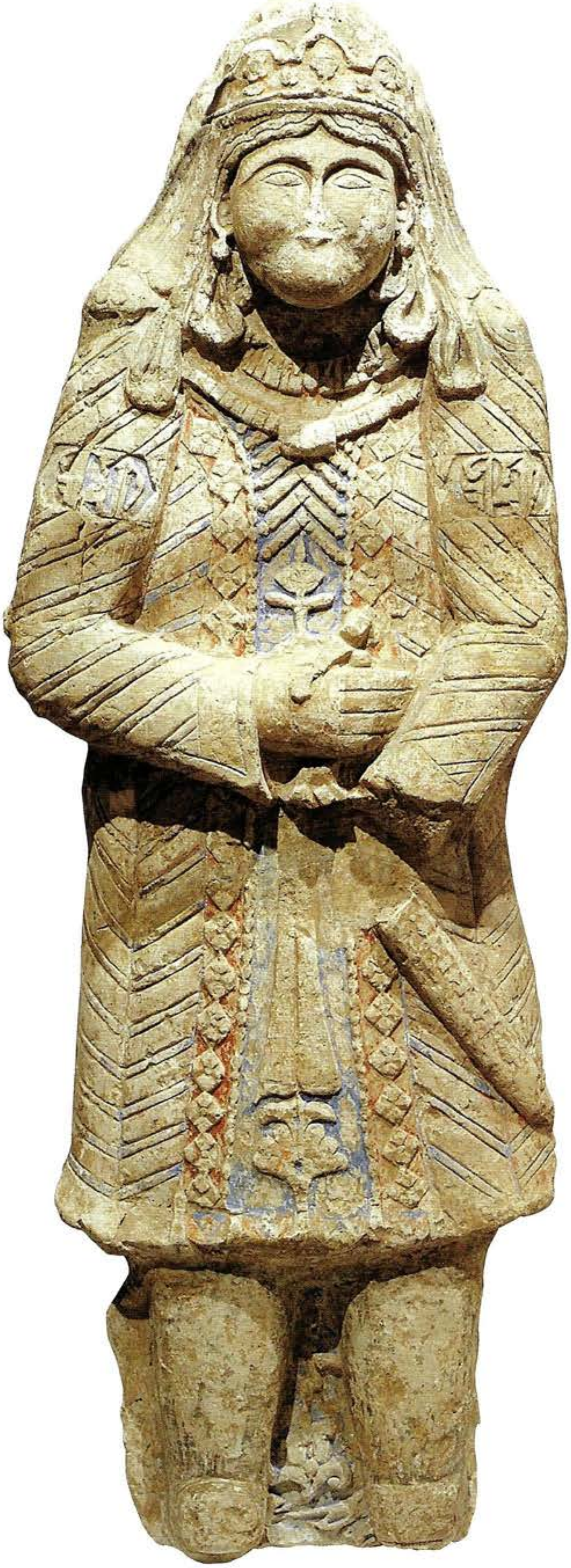
This enigmatic figure ceremoniously holding a cup is from Kyrgyzstan and may have marked a grave. The statue was half-buried, so that from a distance the figure looked as if he was sitting.

FRITZ VON DER SCHULENBURG © STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST PETERSBURG

CENTRAL ASIAN STATUES
12TH CENTURY

Right: the same ceremonial gesture of clasping a cup is seen in this stone statue of a woman erected by the nomadic Polovets in Turkestan at least four centuries later. She wears a short belted coat and high conical hat similar to the felt hats still used in Uzbekistan. The two holes were carved to catch the steppe winds, emitting haunting sounds. Far right: the stucco figure of a guard is of similar date, but from Afghanistan or Iran. He wears an elaborate headdress and polychrome coat and holds a sword. The woman (244cm) is almost twice the height of the guard.

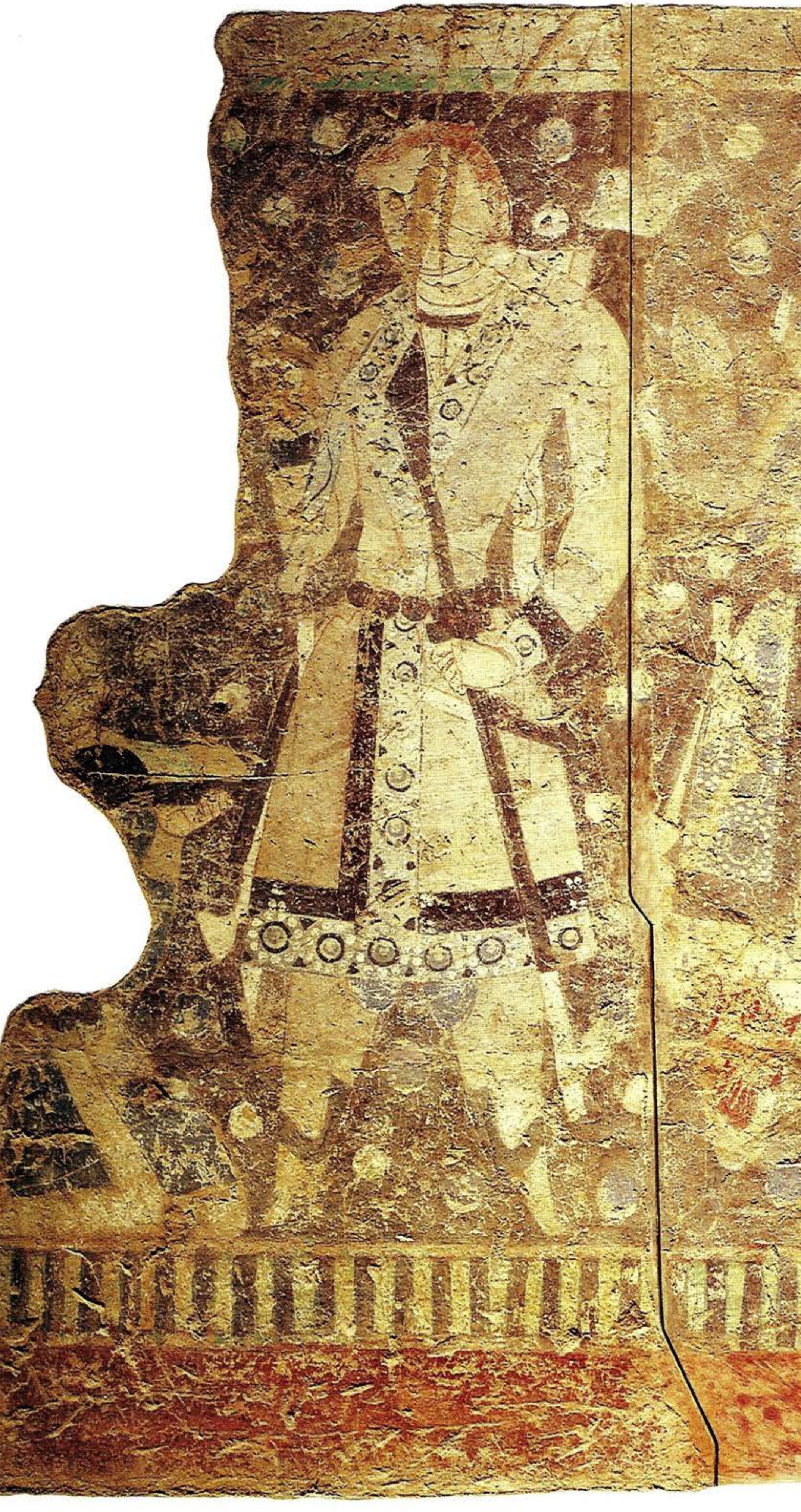


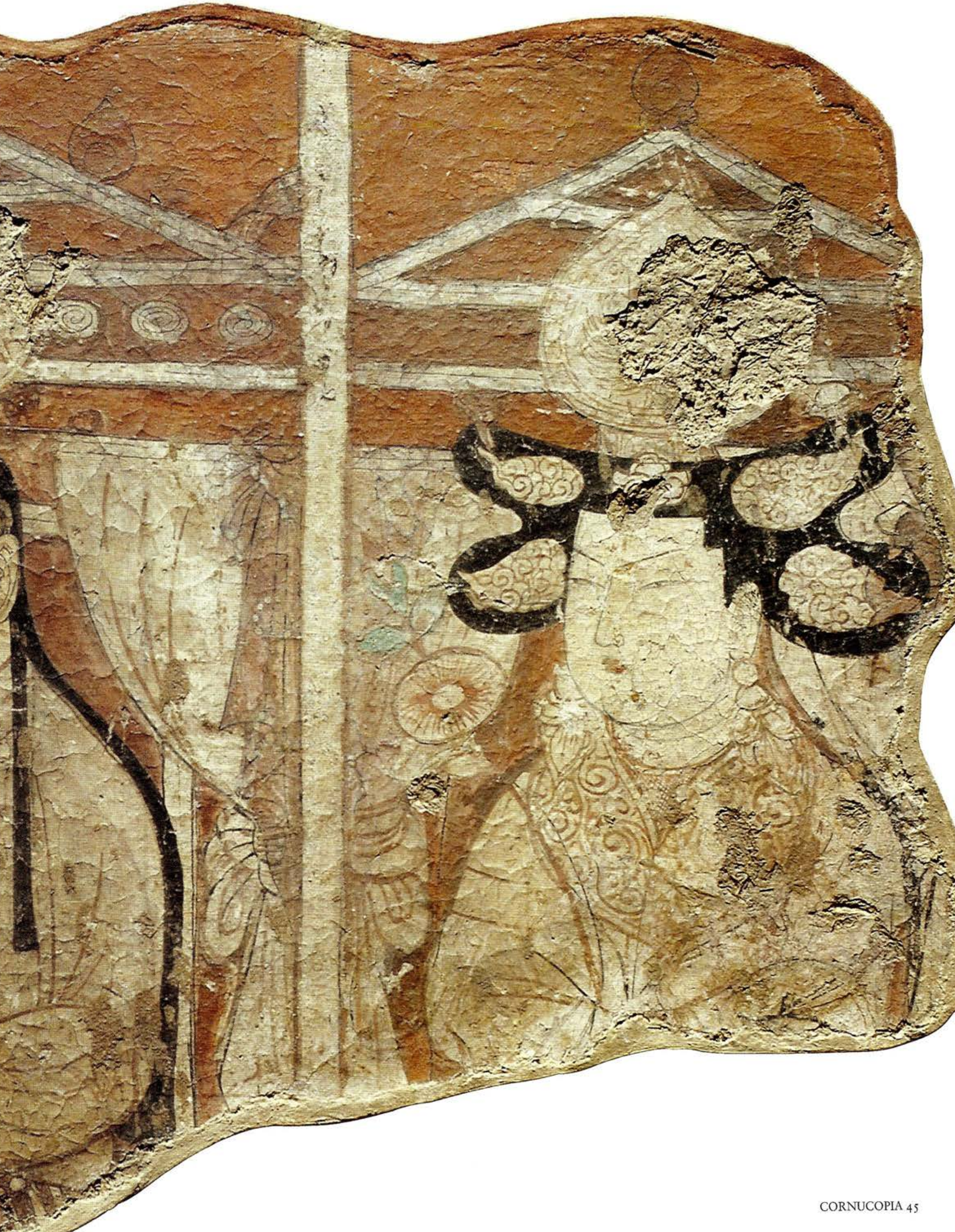


FRITZ VON DER SCHULENBURG RIGHT: STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST PETERSBURG. FAR RIGHT: METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

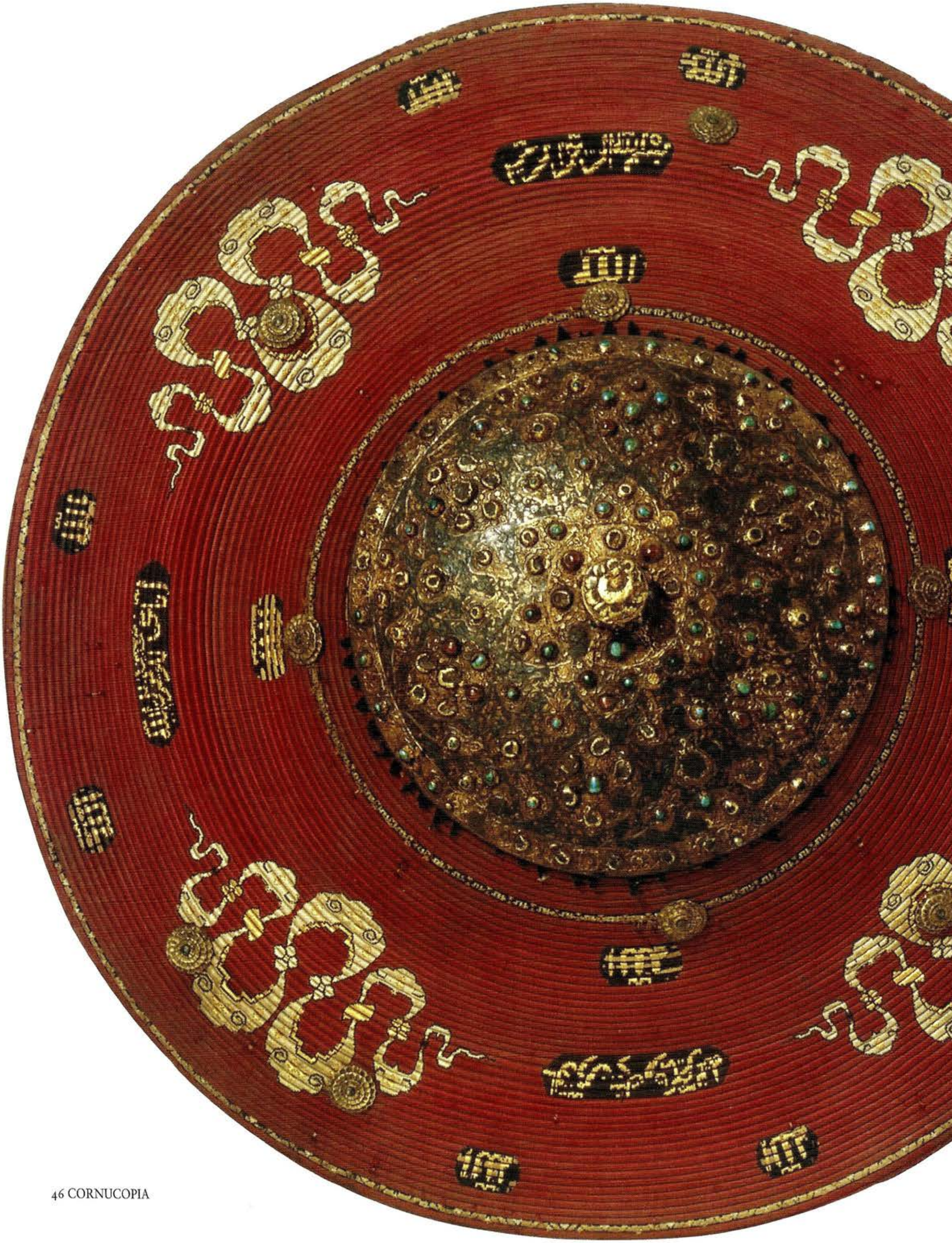
TOKHARIAN BENEFACTORS,
XINJIANG, 5TH–6TH CENTURY

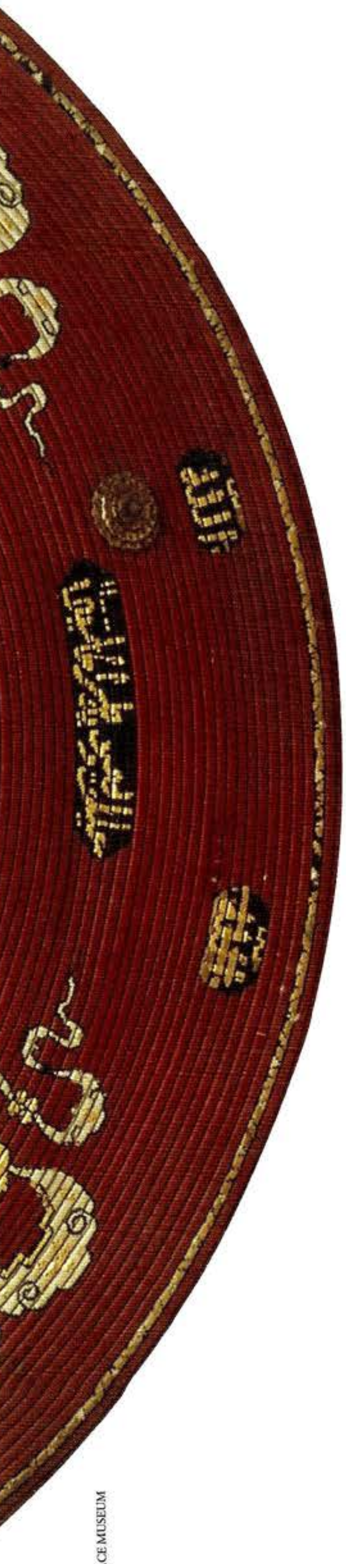
This fragment of painted stucco is from a wall painting in the Kızıl caves in Xinjiang, in western China. It was brought back by the German mission to Central Asia in 1914 and is now in Berlin. Dating from the 5th or 6th century, it shows a group of men of high rank processing, presumably towards the Buddha. They are patrons of a cave-temple and would have had themselves immortalised by being painted on the cave wall. They are Tokharians, a people with their own Indo-European language who left their mark on the oasis cultures of eastern Central Asia – and whose hair, worn in plaits and pigtails, is shown here as distinctly reddish. They wear swords, pointed boots and coats in luxurious fabrics of Sasanian (Persian) design. A figure kneels before them with a dish of fruit or sweetmeats.





FRITZ VON DER SCHULENBURG © STAATLICHE MUSEEN ZU BERLIN, PREUßISCHER KULTURBESITZ, MUSEUM FÜR INDISCHE KUNST

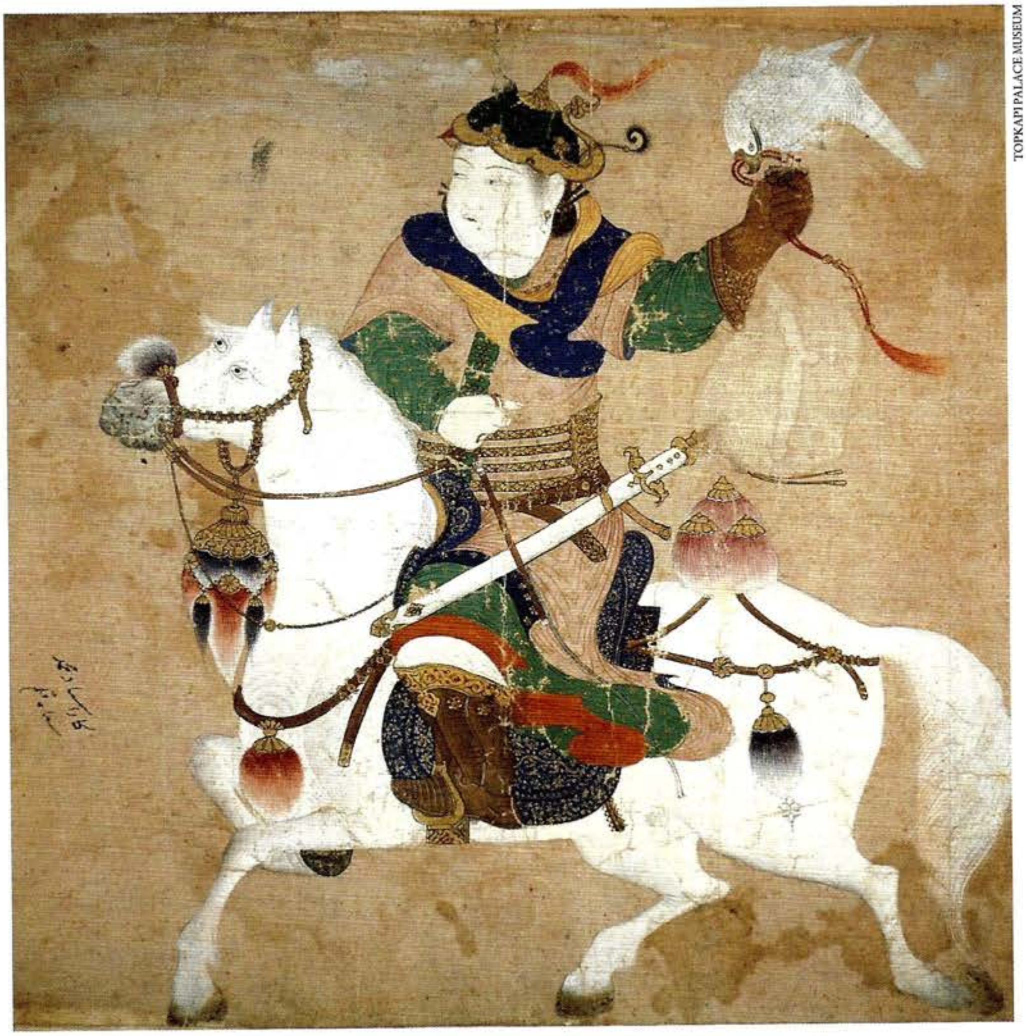




TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM

CEREMONIAL SHIELD ISTANBUL, 16TH CENTURY

Left: made of wicker wound with crimson silk thread, this late 16th-century shield has a boss encrusted with rubies and turquoise, which suggests that it was intended for ceremonial use. Measuring 56cm in diameter, it is embroidered with four Chinese cloud-scrolls and cartouches inscribed with the 'Victory' sura of the Koran. Part of the Topkapı collection, it is similar in form to an earlier shield from Samarkand also in the exhibition. The latter is made of steel embellished with silver and is inscribed with the name of Ulugh Beg, probably Tamerlane's grandson.



TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM

A PRINCELY FALCONER TABRIZ, 15TH CENTURY

Above: an idealised princely warrior mounted on a white horse is the subject of this splendid miniature, which has been attributed to Muhammad Siyah Qalam (Muhammad of the Black Pen, see page 54). But it is more closely related to the work of Shaikhi, a Turkmen working in Tabriz in the late 15th century. The artist has brilliantly captured the sense of arrested motion. He also clearly takes delight in rendering the details of the falconer's elaborate costume, the blue saddle and gem-encrusted scabbard, the horse's gilt-adorned tack and fur tassels, the falcon biting on its leash. Magnificent hunts were a feature of life at the Aqqoyunlu court, which was nomadic but based in Tabriz.

1,000 YEARS OF THE TURKS

By John Carswell

Years ago – 1952, to be precise – I was working as an archaeological draughtsman in a little Anatolian village and had the use of the local schoolroom. On the wall was a map, with great arrows sweeping out of Central Asia, not only to Turkey but to everywhere else in the world. In my youthful ignorance this seemed ridiculous.

Now I know better. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the possibility of travelling freely throughout China, what was once an apparently chauvinist interpretation of history can be reinforced by factual evidence. And this is really what the exhibition at the Royal Academy is all about.

Its avowed intention is to show through the choice of several hundred carefully chosen artefacts how the Turkic race moved westwards from its origins in Central Asia bordering on China. First came the Uighurs, in evidence in the seventh century, when trade along the Silk Road was in full swing under the Tang dynasty (618–901). They were followed by the Seljuks, who settled in Iran and Syria, a group of whom pushed further on and reached Anatolia. Then came the Mongols, who under Genghis Khan created the greatest empire the world has ever seen, stretching from the Mediterranean to the Pacific. Finally, in the fourteenth century Timur (Tamerlane) welded together the many disparate cultural strains from central and western Asia.

It was from this extraordinary amalgam that the Ottoman dynasty sprang, with a modest start under Osman, a tribal leader in western Anatolia, on the frontiers of Byzantium. With increasing power, the Turks established their first capital at Bursa, followed by Edirne on the European mainland. Byzantium was surrounded, and with the siege and capture of Constantinople in 1453 by Mehmet the Conqueror, Istanbul became the third and ultimate capital of the Ottoman Empire, reaching its peak under Süleyman the Magnificent in the mid-sixteenth century.

The Royal Academy uses the entirety of its exhibition space on the main floor to illustrate this epic theme, with over 350 works of art drawn from thirty-seven different institutions and other sources. Loans from the collections of the Topkapı Palace and the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art in Istanbul predominate. Many of these objects have never been exhibited outside Turkey before, and they are combined with artefacts from all over the world to produce a stunning assembly.

It is no exaggeration to say that this is one of the greatest exhibitions ever held at the Royal Academy, ranking with the exhibitions of Chinese and Persian Art at Burlington House before the Second World War which had such a profound effect on the understanding of cultures outside the European tradition.

Perhaps even more amazing is the speed with which this one has been put together, taking

IZNIK PLATE, CIRCA 1540

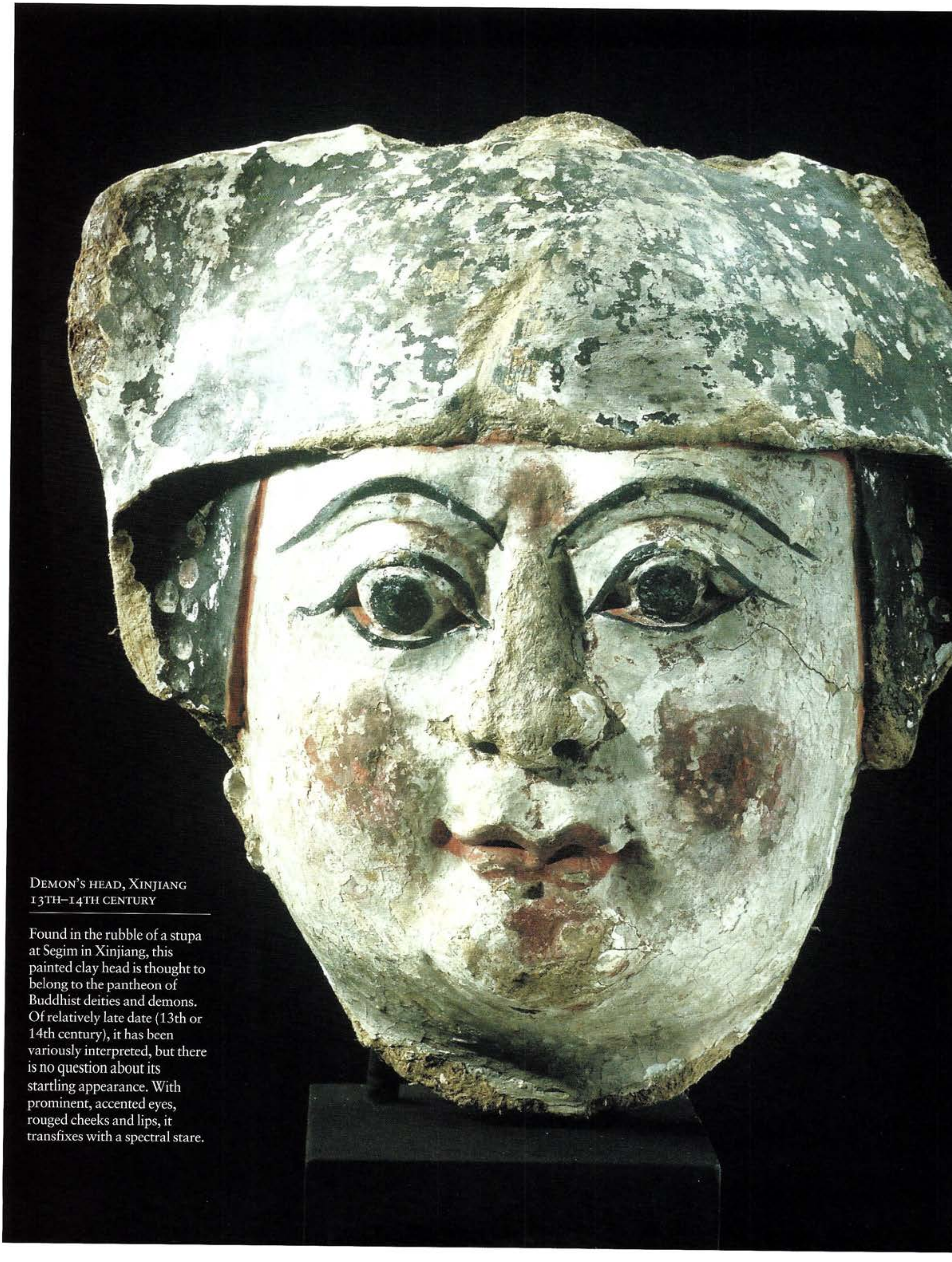
Right: Iznik ceramics were initially inspired by Chinese porcelain, but by the time of their greatest flowering, in the 16th century, the designs and colours had evolved dramatically. The fanciful hybrid motifs of this Iznik dish, akin to artichokes with thick stems, are a far cry from the naturalistic fruit and flowers on the Chinese ewer below. The design covers the whole dish, with total disregard for the division between rim and centre.

HADIYE CANGÖKÇE © TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM

MING EWER, EARLY 15TH CENTURY

Left: one of the 12,000 pieces of Chinese porcelain that successive sultans acquired for the Topkapı, this blue and white Ming ewer has silver-gilt mounts added later, circa 1500, by the Ottomans; the dragon's-head mount linking the handle to the neck is particularly fine. Cobalt has been applied in varying thicknesses to give a subtle range of blues.

REINALDO VIEGAS © CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN MUSEUM



DEMON'S HEAD, XINJIANG
13TH–14TH CENTURY

Found in the rubble of a stupa at Segim in Xinjiang, this painted clay head is thought to belong to the pantheon of Buddhist deities and demons. Of relatively late date (13th or 14th century), it has been variously interpreted, but there is no question about its startling appearance. With prominent, accented eyes, rouged cheeks and lips, it transfixes with a spectral stare.

STAATLICHE MUSEEN ZU BERLIN, PREUßISCHER KULTURBESITZ, MUSEUM FÜR INDISCHE KUNST

advantage of an unexpected gap in the Academy's programme, normally fully committed for years to come. Such haste could lead to lacunae and the evidence of untimely speed, but there is none here, either in conception or in execution.

How has this complex story lasting over a millennium been tackled, to make it accessible to a public largely uninformed about Turkish history, and treading on unfamiliar aesthetic territory? It is divided into two parts – the exhibition itself, and the 500-page catalogue that accompanies it (both produced miraculously on schedule). This symbiotic approach is highly successful.

The exhibition is sensibly laid out chronologically. Mounting the grand staircase, the visitor swings immediately left into a gallery entirely devoted to gigantic colour photographs, and is exposed to landscapes and architectural images outside any Western terms of reference. Memories of a sun-baked holiday on the south coast of Turkey are no help here. Only since the relatively recent collapse of communism has it been possible to visit these sites, and for many it is *terra incognita*.

The real impact of this section, though, is created by the choice of images and the way they have been displayed. One is immediately aware of being led by the hand of a master designer who knows exactly what responses he wants to evoke.

The exhibition was designed by Ivor Heal, no stranger to the Royal Academy. After the initial wake-up photographic section, Heal has devised a series of interiors to display the diversity of the objects. The installation is monumental in scale, but simple and refined in execution. The meticulously crafted cases are designed to exhibit the objects to maximum effect. The colour scheme is sober, in shades of grey, against which light-sensitive materials such as textiles, carpets and works on paper glow. Less vulnerable objects such as silver, gold and porcelain encrusted with gems dazzle in the spotlights.

If you look up into the shadows, the gilded splendour of the Academy's vaulted ceilings makes a wonderful roof for this treasury. If you look down, you will see that the designer has taken into consideration not only the parquet floors, but also the cast-iron central-heating grilles. He has noticed that both are curiously Islamic in their geometric design. At one point he has sited two cases on the exact axis of two grilles, each containing a wooden Koran stand.

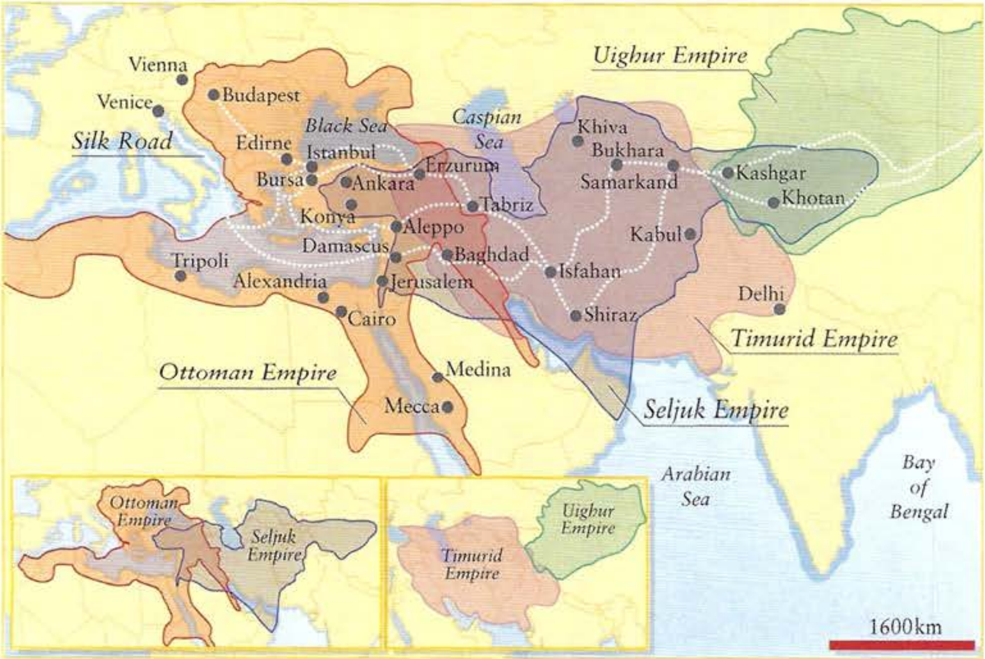
Elsewhere it is clear that he has been to Istanbul and thought deeply about what he saw. He has picked details of Ottoman doors and windows, and used them not as frames but as a subtle leitmotif throughout the exhibition. Each gallery is linked to the next, like beads in a necklace, and each introduces a new element of surprise. But then, what fantastic objects he has had to work with.

The earliest Central Asian material survives only thanks to Russian and German expeditions a century ago, and the museums of St Petersburg and Berlin have lent generously to the exhibition. These artefacts are supplemented by a couple of manuscripts in Uighur Turkic exstracted from the Buddhist caves at Dunhuang by the Hungarian explorer Aurel Stein, then in the employ of the British Raj in India (who gave him a knighthood). The manuscripts are now in London (the catalogue ingenuously states that they were "brought to the British Museum"). These frescoes and manuscripts, masks and statues paint a vivid picture of the Turks and their Central Asian environment.

The next section deals with the Turkish expansion westwards in the early medieval period (950–1250) and the establishment of the Great Seljuks in Iran. Here – amplifying the evidence of manuscript illustrations – ceramics and metalwork display courtly scenes, and even signs of the Zodiac in the form of figures spattered with stars and constellations. The Seljuk penetration into Anatolia produced a new artistic synthesis, drawing on local, Syrian and Caucasian traditions. The architectural decorative elements are perhaps the most striking – the great doors from Cizre and the wooden cenotaph carved in deep relief from Akşehir. Also from the Seljuk period are some of the oldest extant Turkish carpets, such as the two thirteenth-century fragments from Konya.

But if one were to single out any particular group of works of art in the exhibition, it must surely be the fantastic drawings attributed to Muhammad Siyah Qalam (Muhammad of the Black Pen) from albums in the library of Topkapı Sarayı. These are so extraordinary, in virtuosity and subject matter, that they are unparalleled. Never seen in such quantity outside Turkey before, in many ways they rival the famous exhibition at the Academy some years ago of Leonardo da Vinci's drawings, from another royal collection, the one at Windsor. In many ways they are more important, because they are almost totally unknown. They alone are worth a pilgrimage to London, for even in Istanbul the chance to peruse them is a privilege reserved for scholars.

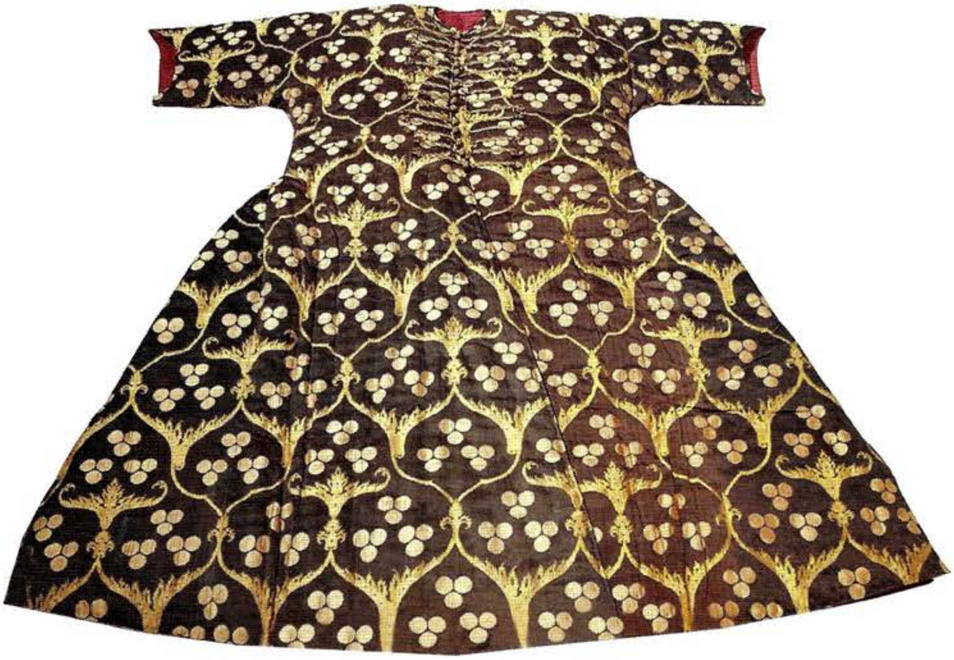
What are these drawing, and what are they all about? This has been the subject of debate for years, with a symposium in 1980 devoted entirely to the topic. Filiz Çağman, director of the Topkapı, who was instrumental in mounting the exhibition, believes they are illustrations of long-lost stories and fables from Central Asia, used as a kind of ancillary

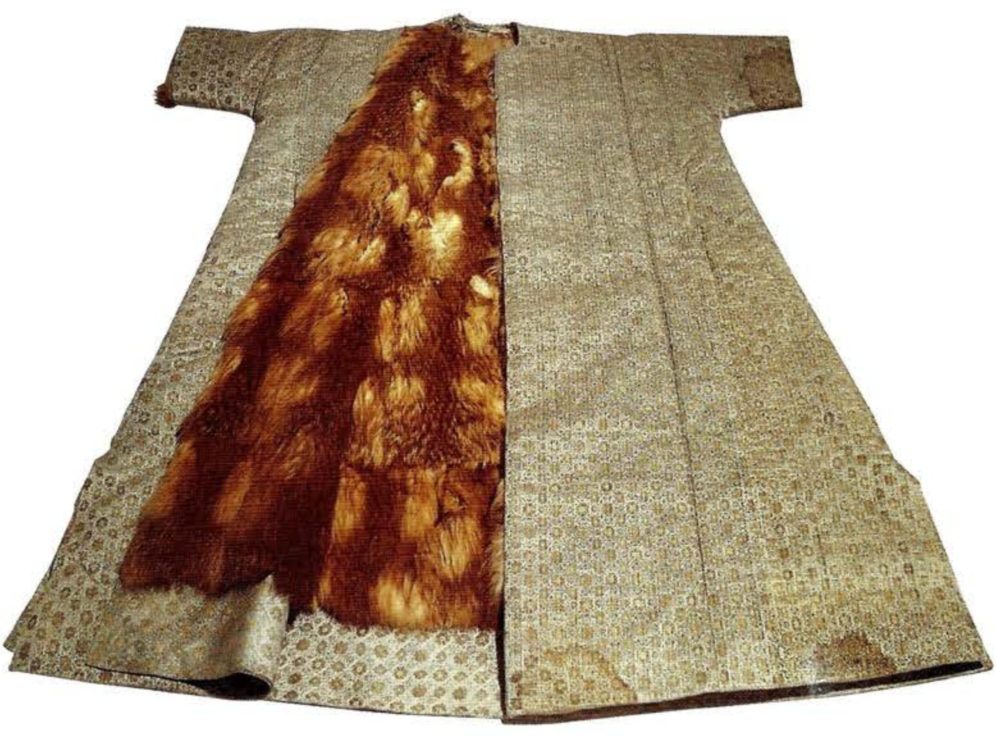


SUSANNA HICKLING

teaching aid when the stories were recounted. One group on exhibition are obviously all by the same hand, though it is more problematic to assign all the drawings in this style to a single artist. There are scenes of everyday life; others are populated with demons who engage ferociously with each other and on occasion impinge on the human world. For anyone who has ventured into the deserts of Central Asia – the Gobi or the Taklamakan, for instance – such fabulous histories and legends are commonplace, and the link with Shamanism is clear.

These drawings are in some ways the turning point in the exhibition, illustrating the nomadic and legendary background from which the Turks came. From the fifteenth century onwards, the westward progression was accompanied by assimilation of the cultures encountered on the way and, perhaps most important, the conversion to Islam. With the creation of the Ottoman Empire all these cultural threads were drawn together. The conquest of the Balkans added a further element, a European one. This connection makes nonsense of the current preoccupation with Turkey "joining" Europe; it has been part of Europe economically for centuries. One forgets how trade with the Ottoman Empire preoccupied the Europeans, first the Italians and later the French and British. Queen Elizabeth I herself sent a letter to the Ottoman sultan suggesting that they might join forces to bust up the Spanish. The Sultan





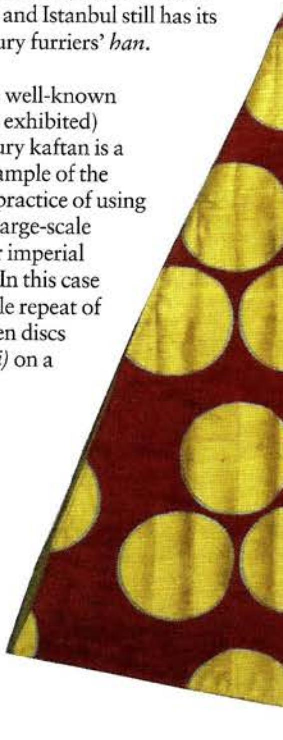
FRITZ VON DER SCHULENBURG © TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM

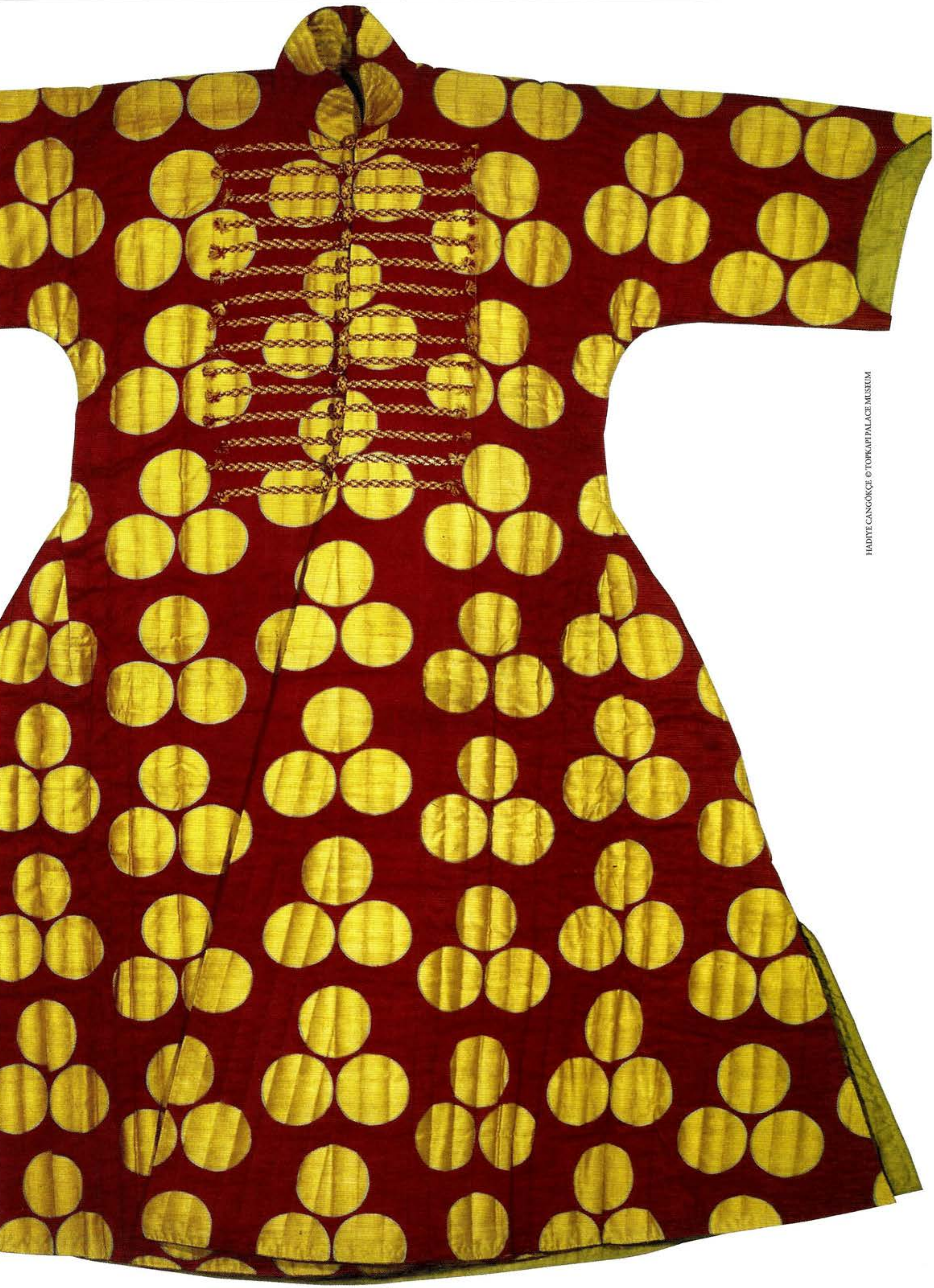
THE SULTANS' KAFTANS

Left: it is hard to equate Selim I's kaftan of delicate black and gilt brocade (c. 1515) with his bold military conquests of Syria and Egypt. His dagger, with its rock-crystal hilt and dangerously sharp spiked blade, also in the exhibition, would seem more in character. The royal *cintamani* (triple-dot) motif, derived from leopards' spots, is unusual in being enclosed here in a latticework of leaves.

Bottom left: Mehmet the Conqueror's kaftan (c.1470) is of silk brocade lined with sable. The minutely worked pattern – knotted branches and rosettes, with leaves of silver thread – suggest that the fabric was produced in Timurid Herat. The Ottomans had a flourishing fur trade with Poland, Russia and the Caucasus, and Istanbul still has its 15th-century furriers' *han*.

Right: this well-known (and often exhibited) 16th-century kaftan is a perfect example of the Ottoman practice of using emphatic large-scale designs for imperial garments. In this case it is a simple repeat of three golden discs *(cintamani)* on a scarlet silk ground.





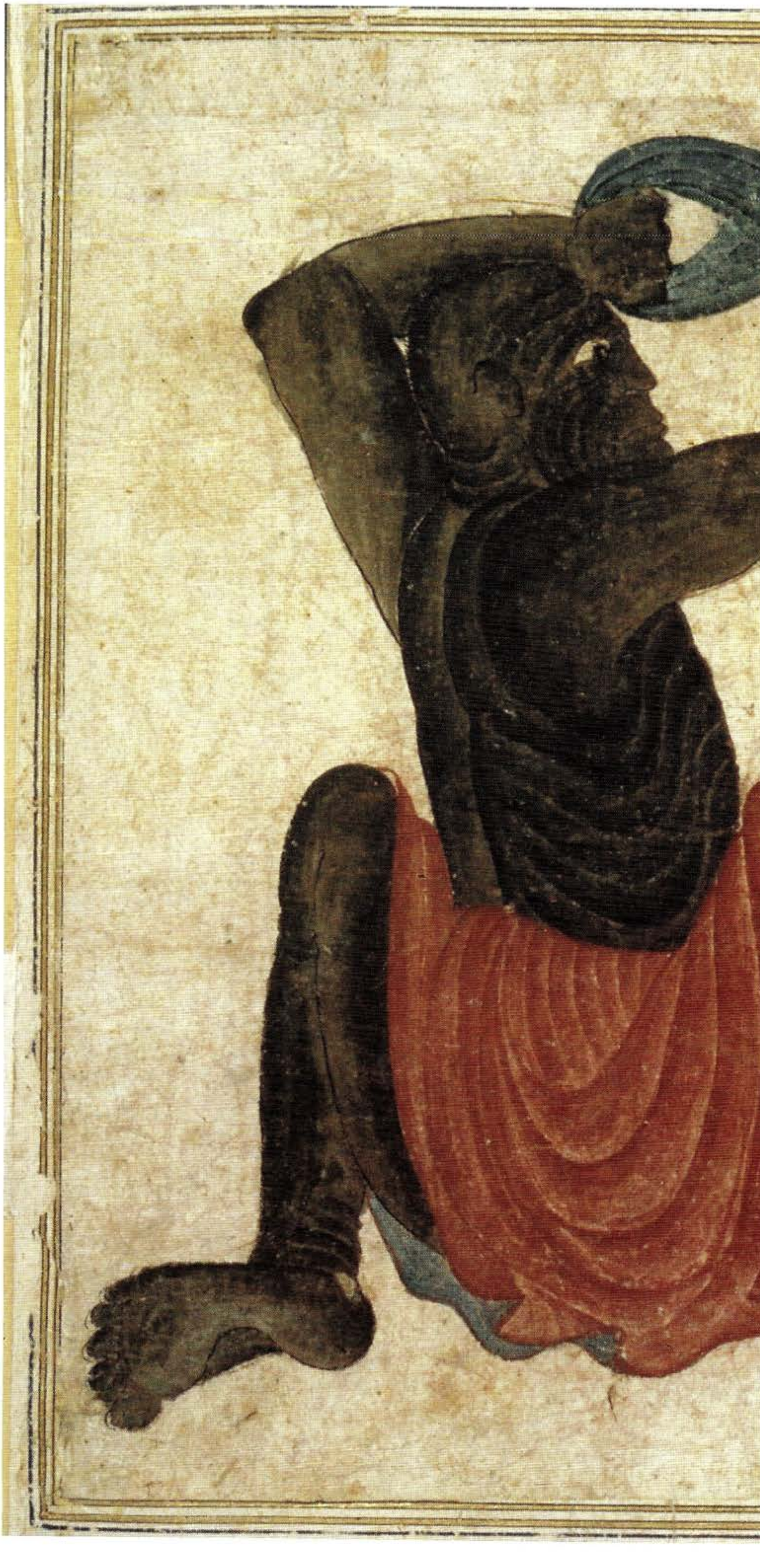
HADIYE CANGÖKÇE © TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM

'The drawings of Muhammad of the Black Pen alone are worth a pilgrimage to London'

sensibly demurred, but the overture led to the establishment of British merchants in Ottoman territory and ultimately to the foundation of the fortunes of British India.

The rest of the exhibition is full of the splendours of the Ottoman Empire. Chinese porcelain and Iznik pottery, arms and armour, textiles, carpets, inlaid woodwork and illuminated manuscripts are arrayed in stunning displays. Information is discreetly communicated, never distracting from the objects. And if you want more, there is the massive catalogue, where the different sections are introduced with informative essays by a wide range of scholars, and every object is illustrated and, at the end, further discussed in great detail. Finally, there is an appendix on the Ottoman sultans as poets and, more importantly, a detailed essay on the Turkic languages and the roots from which modern Turkish – and Turkey itself – derive. ◆

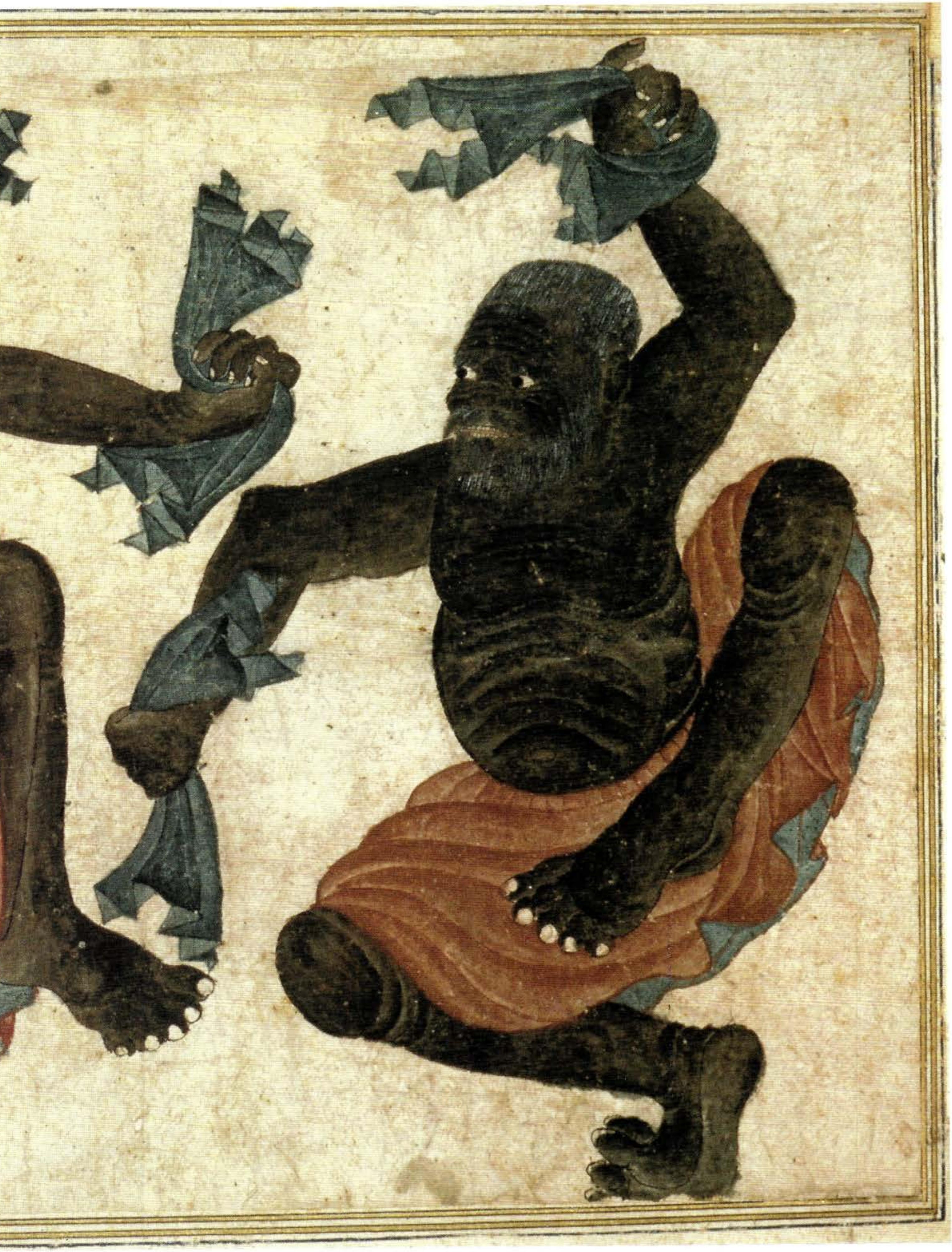
John Carswell is the author of *Iznik Pottery* and *Blue and White: Chinese Porcelain Around the World* (both British Museum Press)

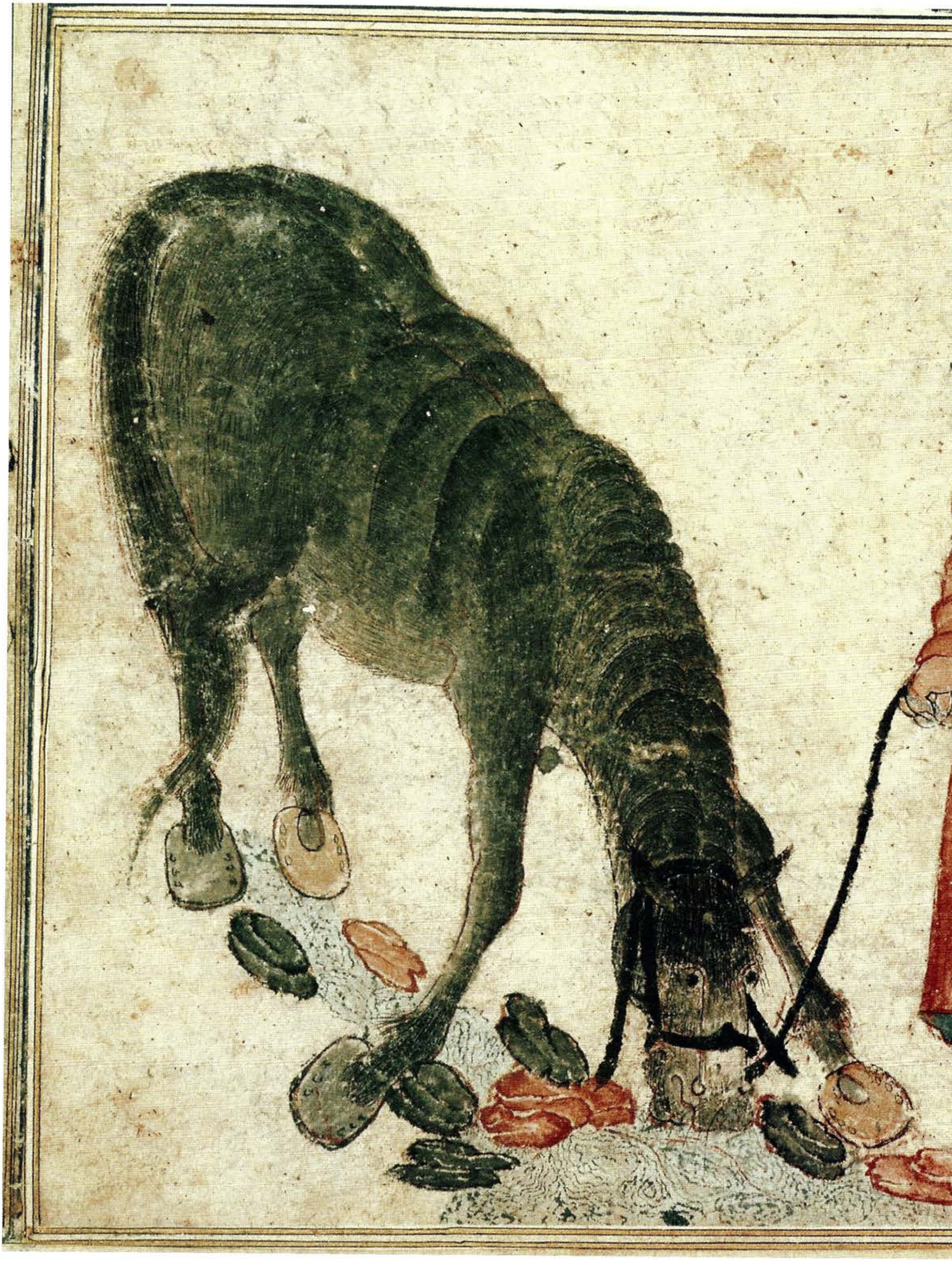


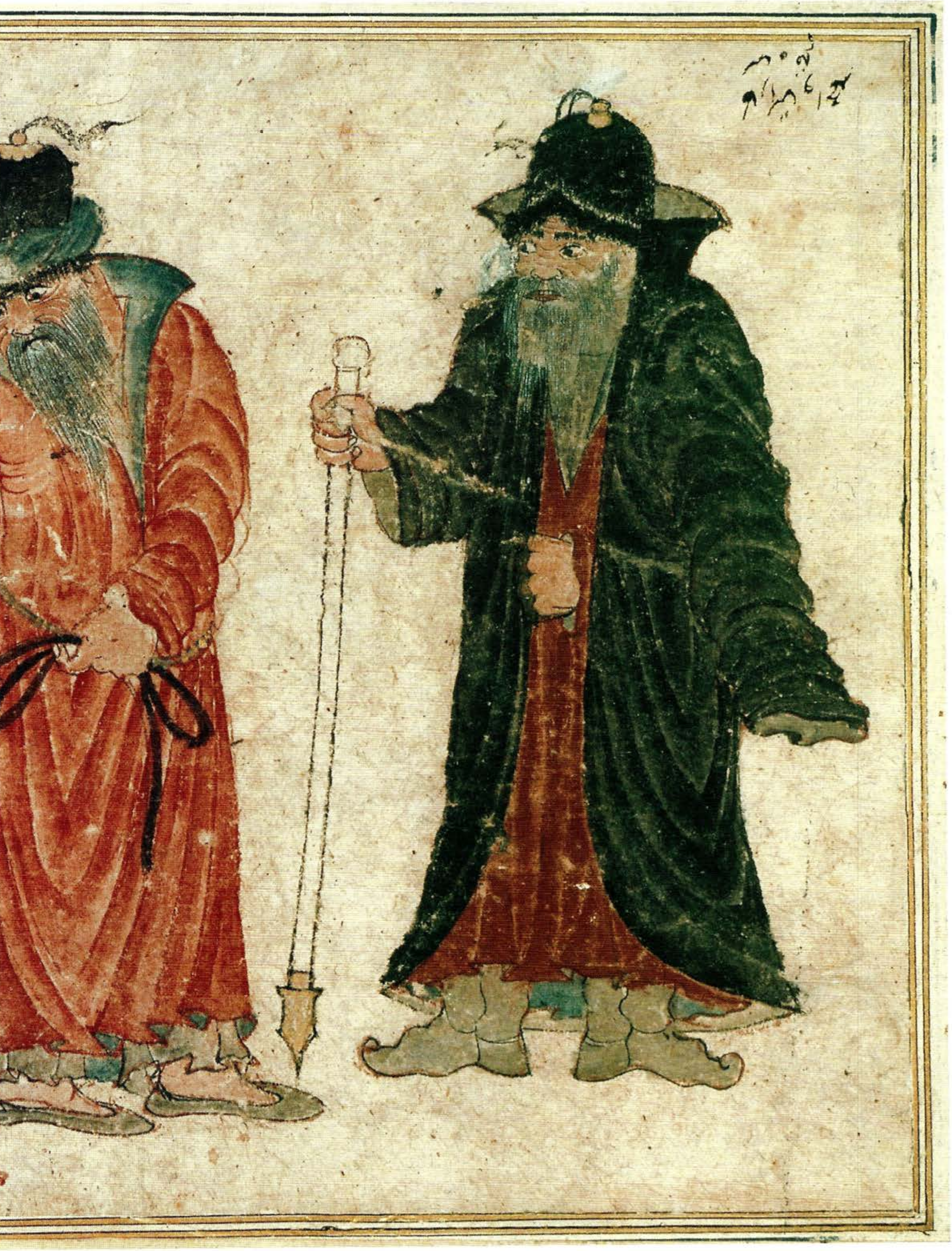
TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM

DANCE
TABRIZ, 14TH CENTURY

Right: two dancing men from the album attributed to Muhammad Siyah Qalam (Muhammad of the Black Pen). This collection of 14th-century drawings, all apparently by the same hand, paints a unique vision of everyday life interwoven with strange rituals involving dervishes and demons. Here the dancers crouch and glower at each other. Bare to the waist, they gesticulate wildly with scarves in each hand. One is bald and seen from behind; the other, with beard, moustache and short, grizzled hair, bares his teeth.



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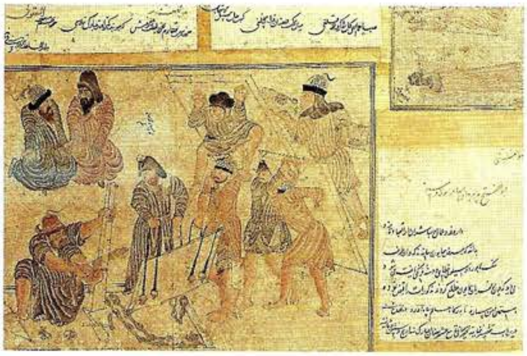

Nomads and demons
Tabriz, 14th century

Previous pages: two nomads water a scrawny horse by a stream bordered with rocks. One holds onto a rope tether, while the other holds a pointed stave. Both wear typical nomadic dress: ankle-length robes, long coats with high collars, and domed hats with rings and tassels on top. Horses recur in many of the album's pastoral scenes. Some are seen quietly grazing or being reluctantly led, but others are carried away by demons and even sacrificed.

Right: on another page from the album presumed to be by Muhammad of the Black Pen, two demons saw a birch tree in half, using a rectangular frame saw of a type in use throughout Asia to this day. These fanged demons have horns like knotted tree stumps rather than the curved ones depicted elsewhere in the album.

Top: the reverse side of the same sheet. The album is a haphazard assembly of paintings and fragments of different types of text – letters, poetry, edicts and verses from the Koran.

Turks: A Journey of a Thousand Years, 600–1600 continues until April 12, 2005, and is open 10am – 6pm daily, with late openings on Fridays and Saturdays until 10pm. Tel +44(0)20 7300 8000; www.turks.org.uk

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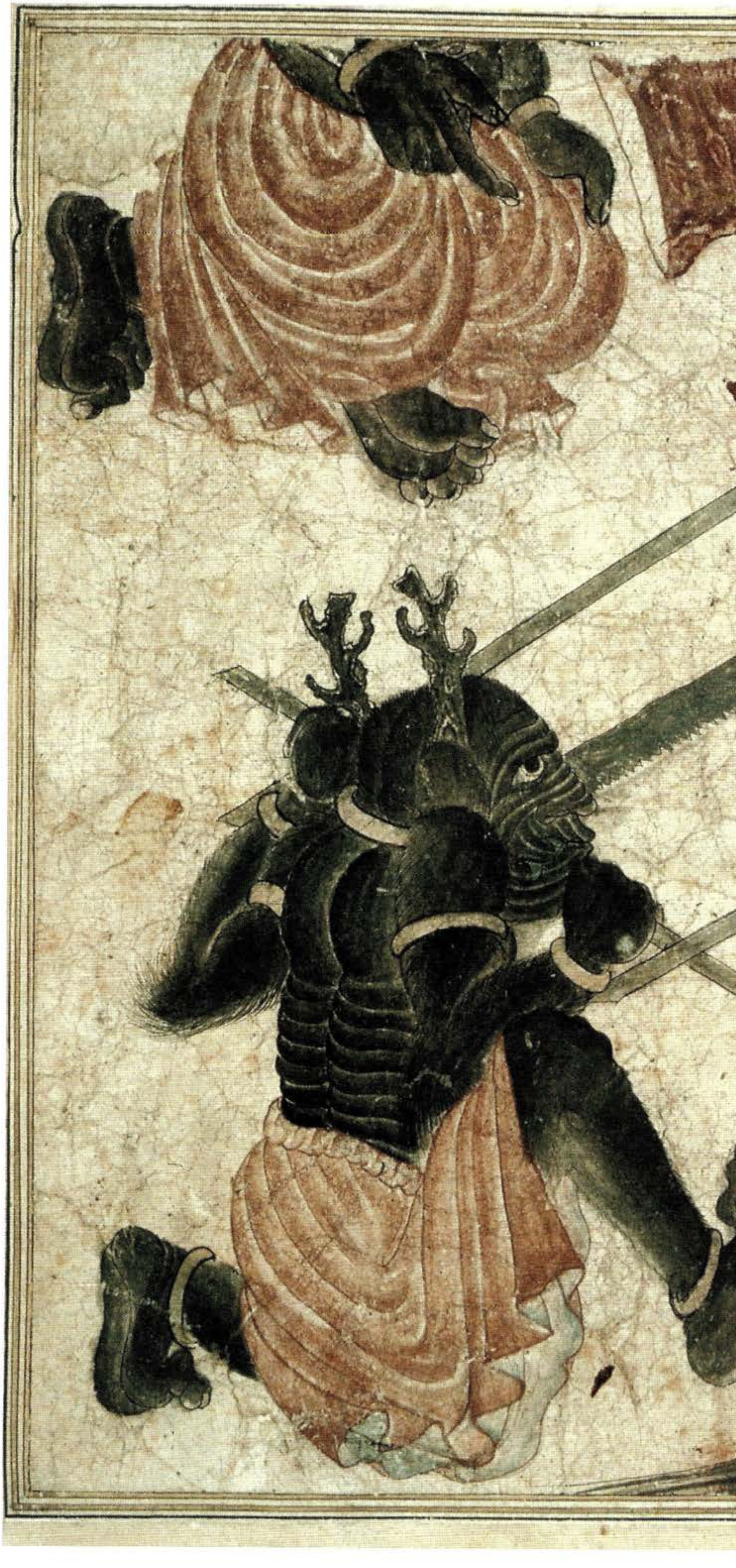

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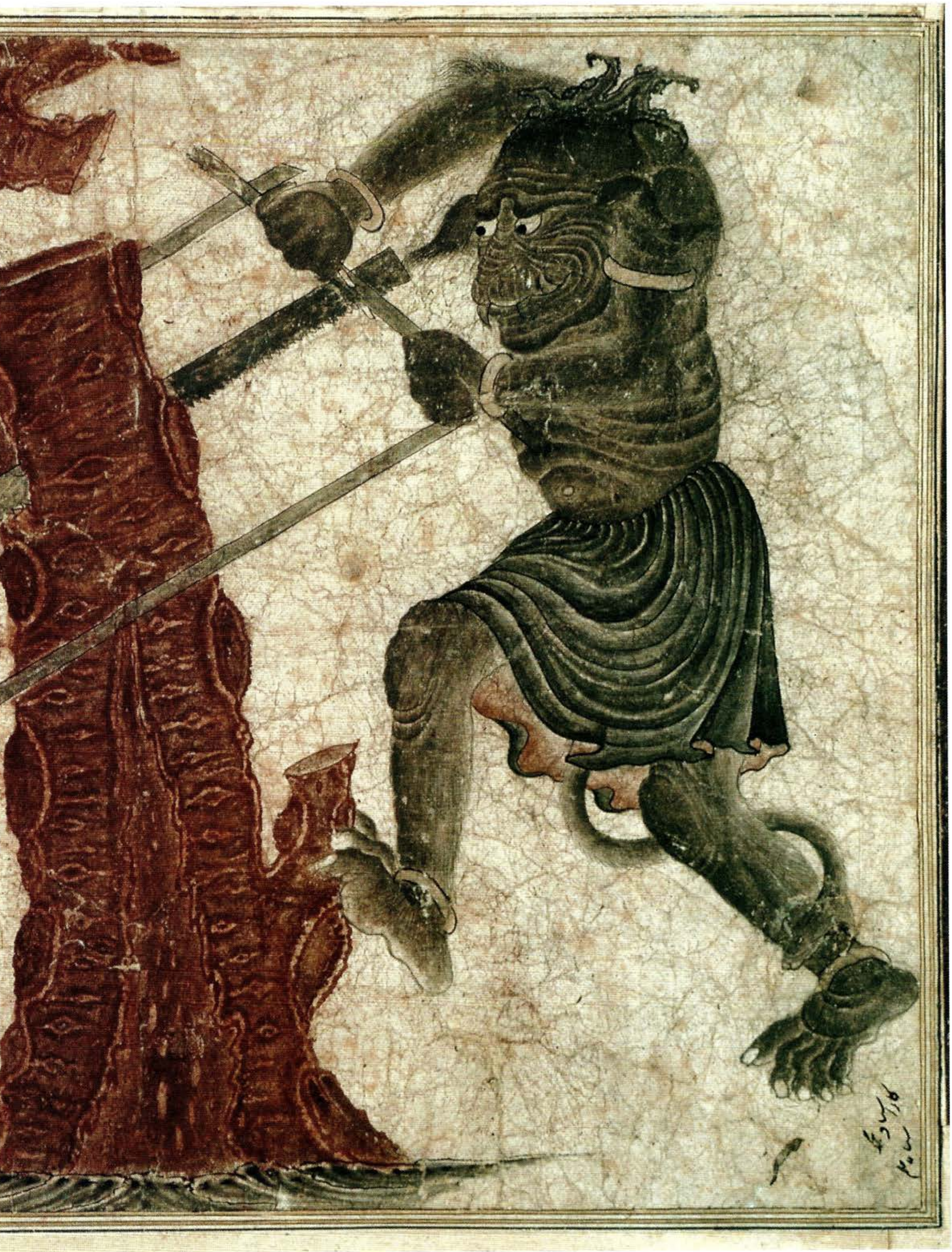
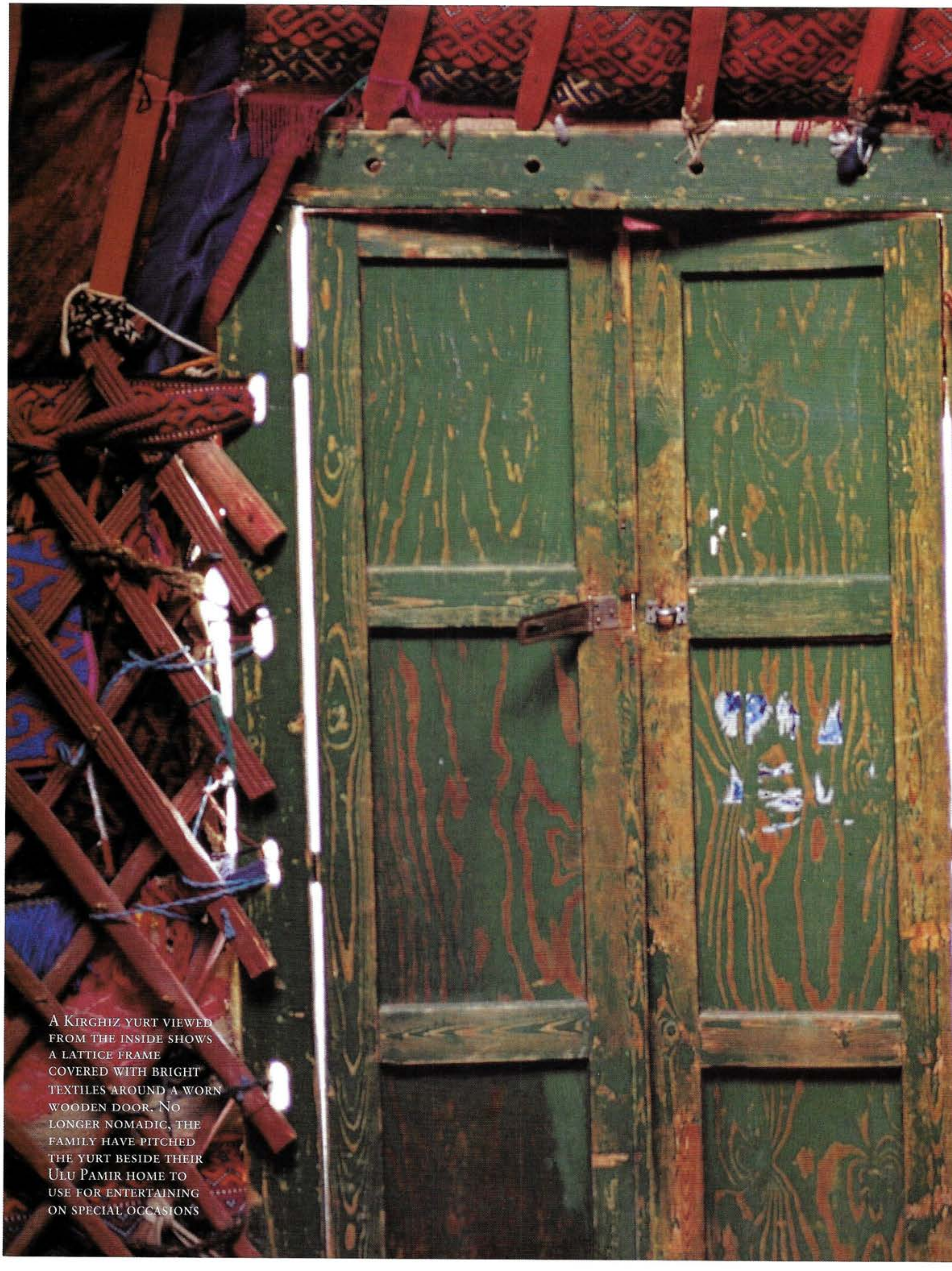
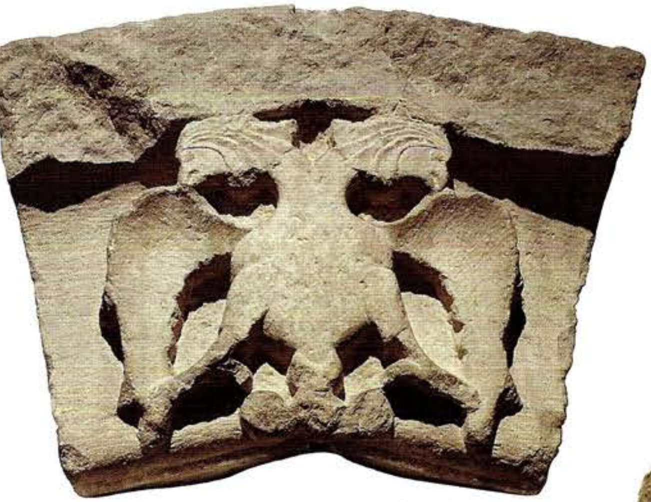




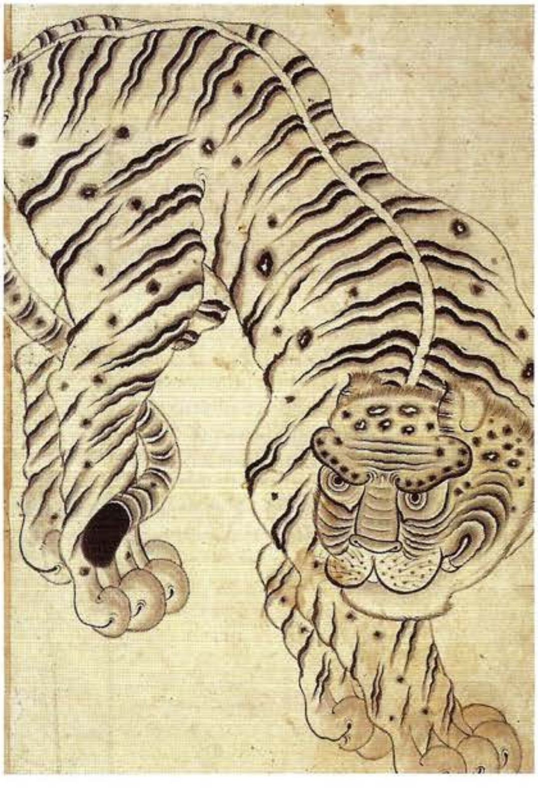
A Kirghiz yurt viewed from the inside shows a lattice frame covered with bright textiles around a worn wooden door. No longer nomadic, the family have pitched the yurt beside their Ulu Pamir home to use for entertaining on special occasions



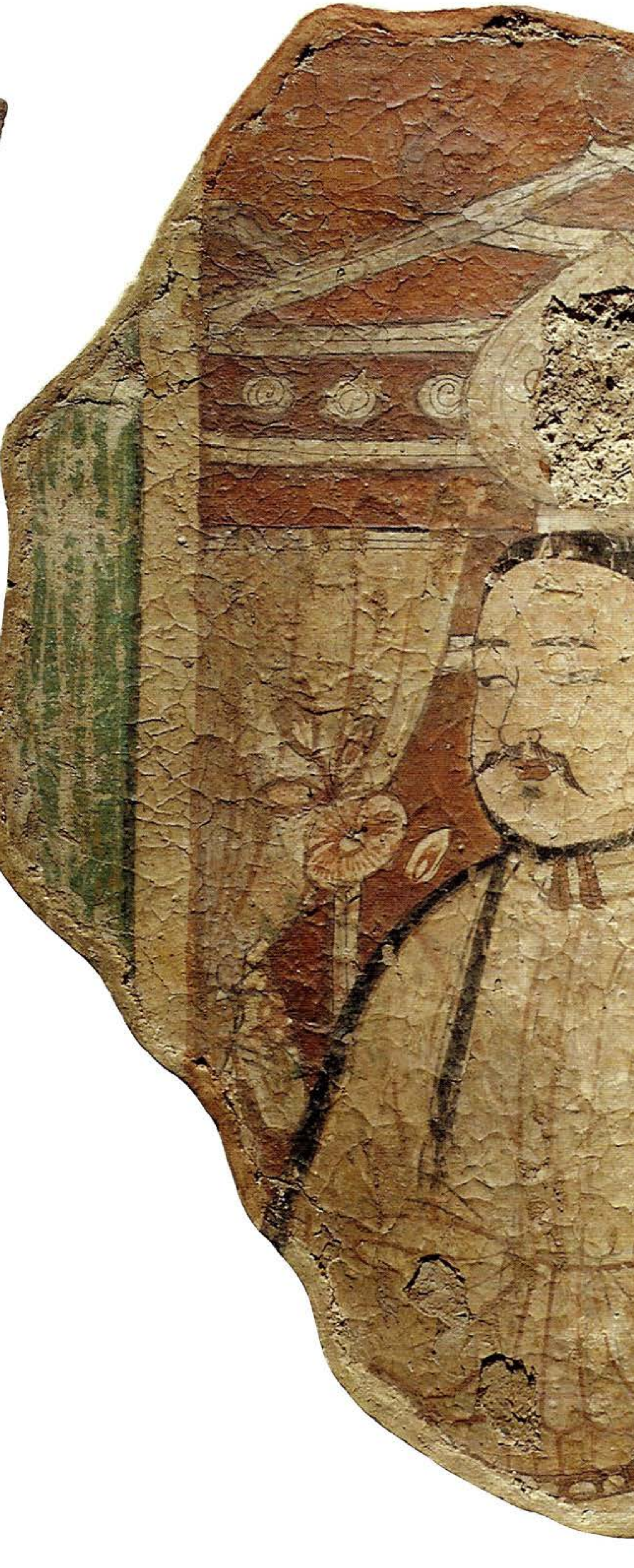
FRITZ VON DER SCHULENBURG © KONYA MÜZE MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ

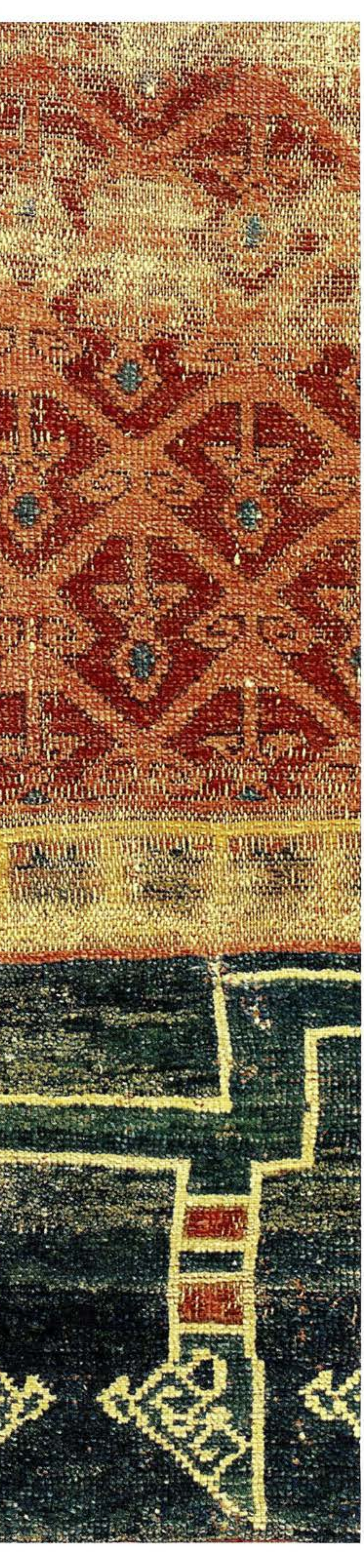
SYMBOLS OF ROYALTY

Above: this Seljuk stone relief of a double-headed eagle is the insignia of Alaeddin Keykubad, who in the 1220s restored Konya's city walls, of which this keystone is doubtless a fragment. The double-headed eagle is particularly associated with the Sultan, appearing on coinage as well as on numerous glazed tiles in the exhibition.
Right: an 11th- or 12th-century Uighur couple are depicted in an idealised version of Turkic royalty; the moon-faced princess has a rosebud mouth and a winged headpiece. The painting, found in the Bezeklik caves of Xinjiang by a German expedition in 1905–7, would have been made to mark the couple's donations to a Buddhist cave-temple.
Below: this rare ink-and-wash study of a tiger from the Topkapı is by a 15th-century Timurid–Turkmen artist from Iran or Central Asia. The wavy stripes became a leitmotif in later Ottoman design.



TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM, ISTANBUL

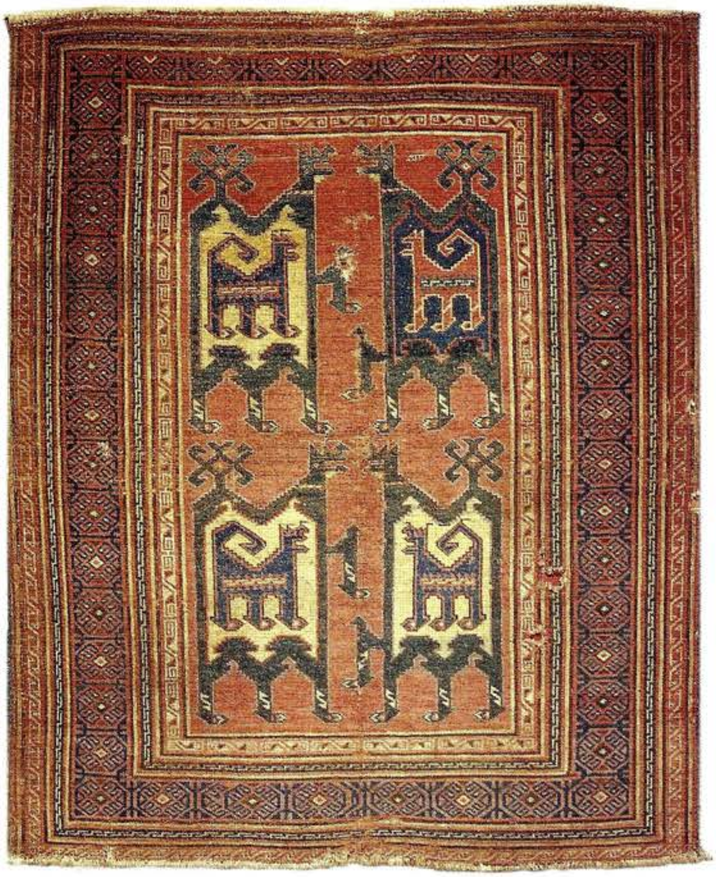




FRITZ VON DER SCHULENBURG © MUSEUM OF TURKISH AND ISLAMIC ART, ISTANBUL

CARPET FOR A SULTAN'S TOMB
KONYA, 13TH CENTURY

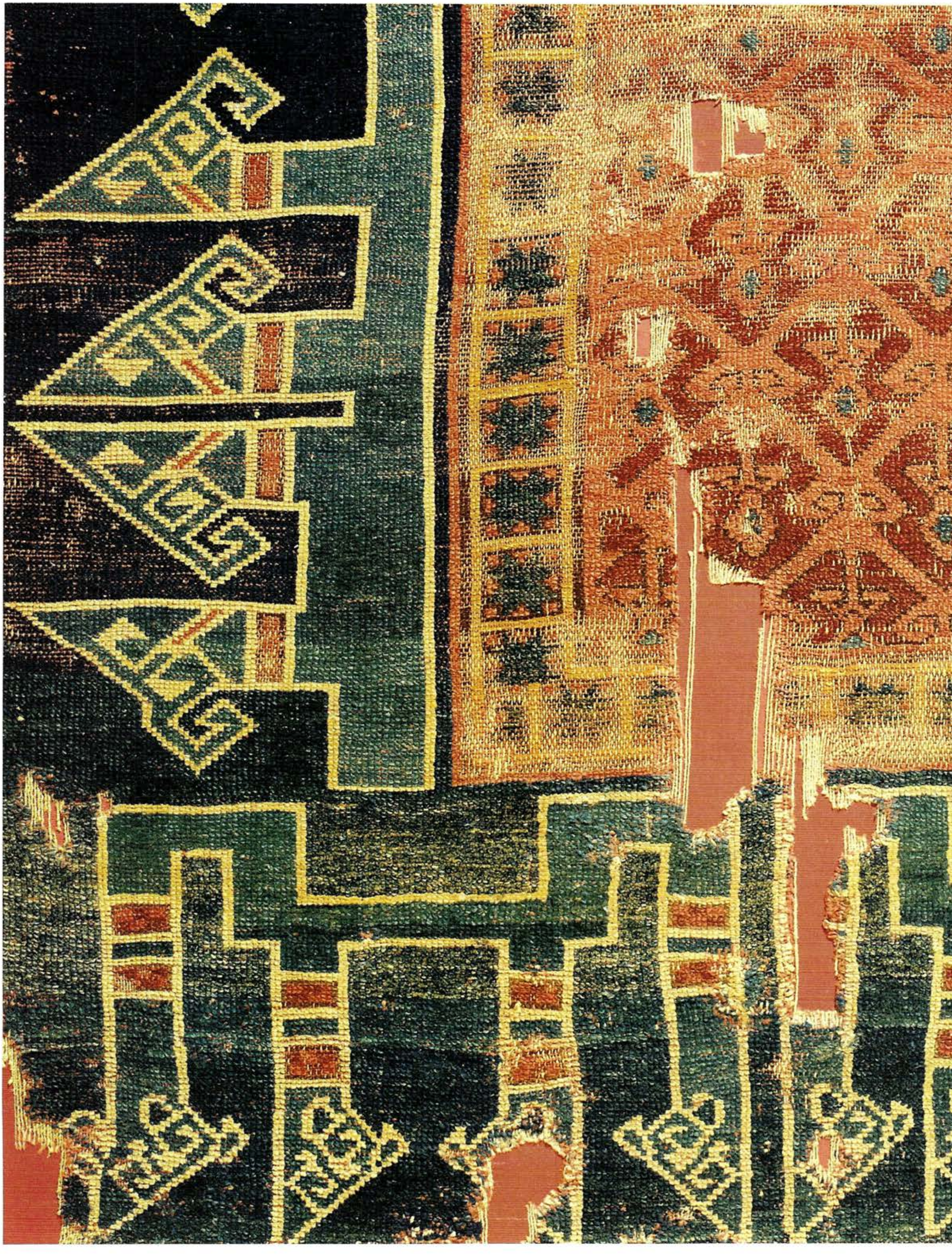
Left: this fragment of Turkish carpet is one of the oldest in existence. Found in the mausoleum of the Seljuk sultan Alaeddin Keykubad, it was made in Konya in the 13th century, when the city was the capital of the Anatolian Seljuks, a branch of the Great Seljuks of Persia. Giant Kufic characters on a dark blue ground form the border of the carpet, which is 5 metres long, giving it a sense of monumental grandeur. In the main field, brilliant blue dots add a dash of contrast to the dark red figures, thought to represent double-headed dragons. Dragons, an important part of Seljuk iconography, also appear as handles on the doors of the Friday Mosque of Cizre in the Royal Academy exhibition. The fragment is part of the collection of the Museum of Islamic and Turkish Art in Istanbul.

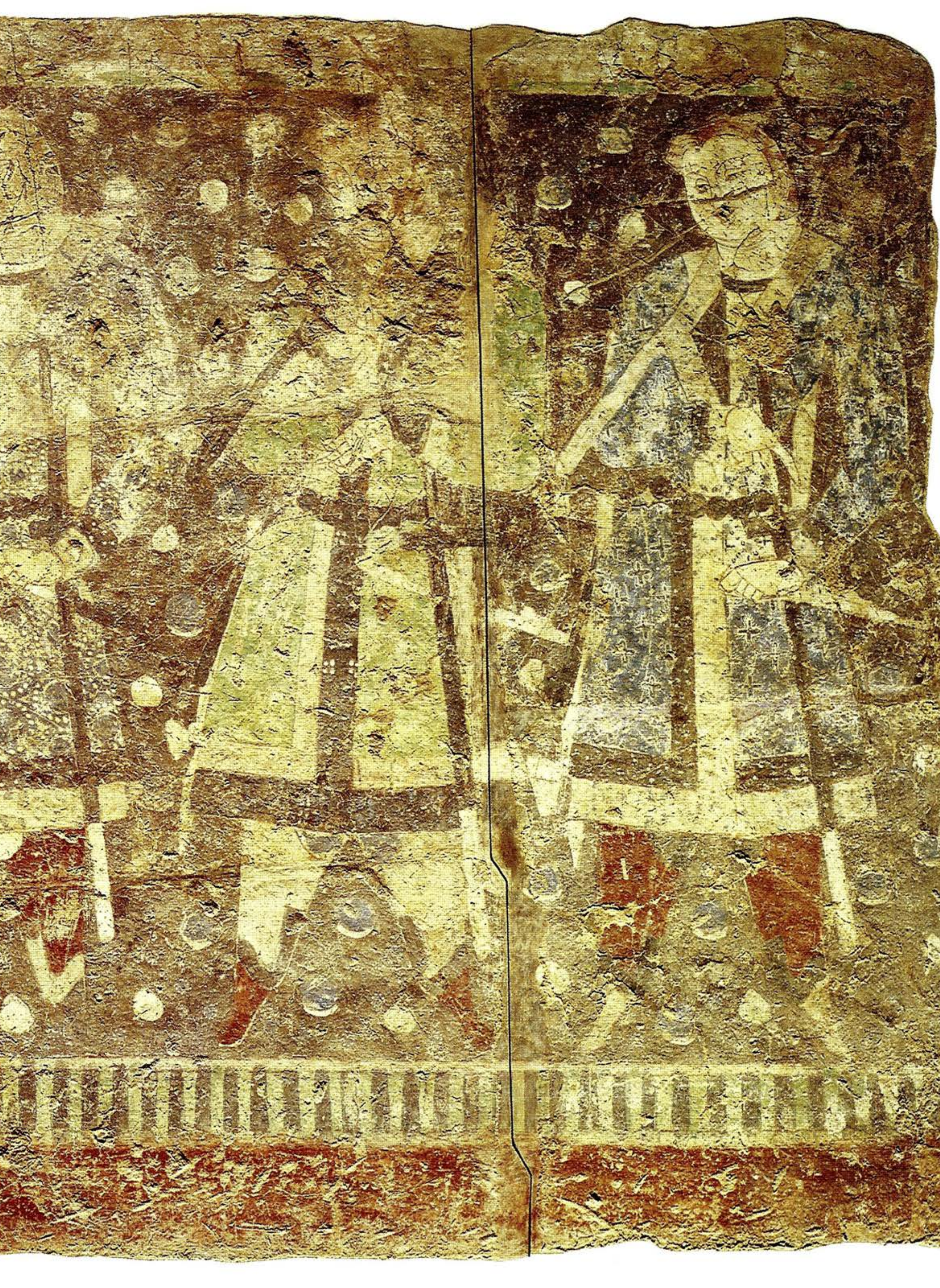


FRITZ VON DER SCHULENBURG. © METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

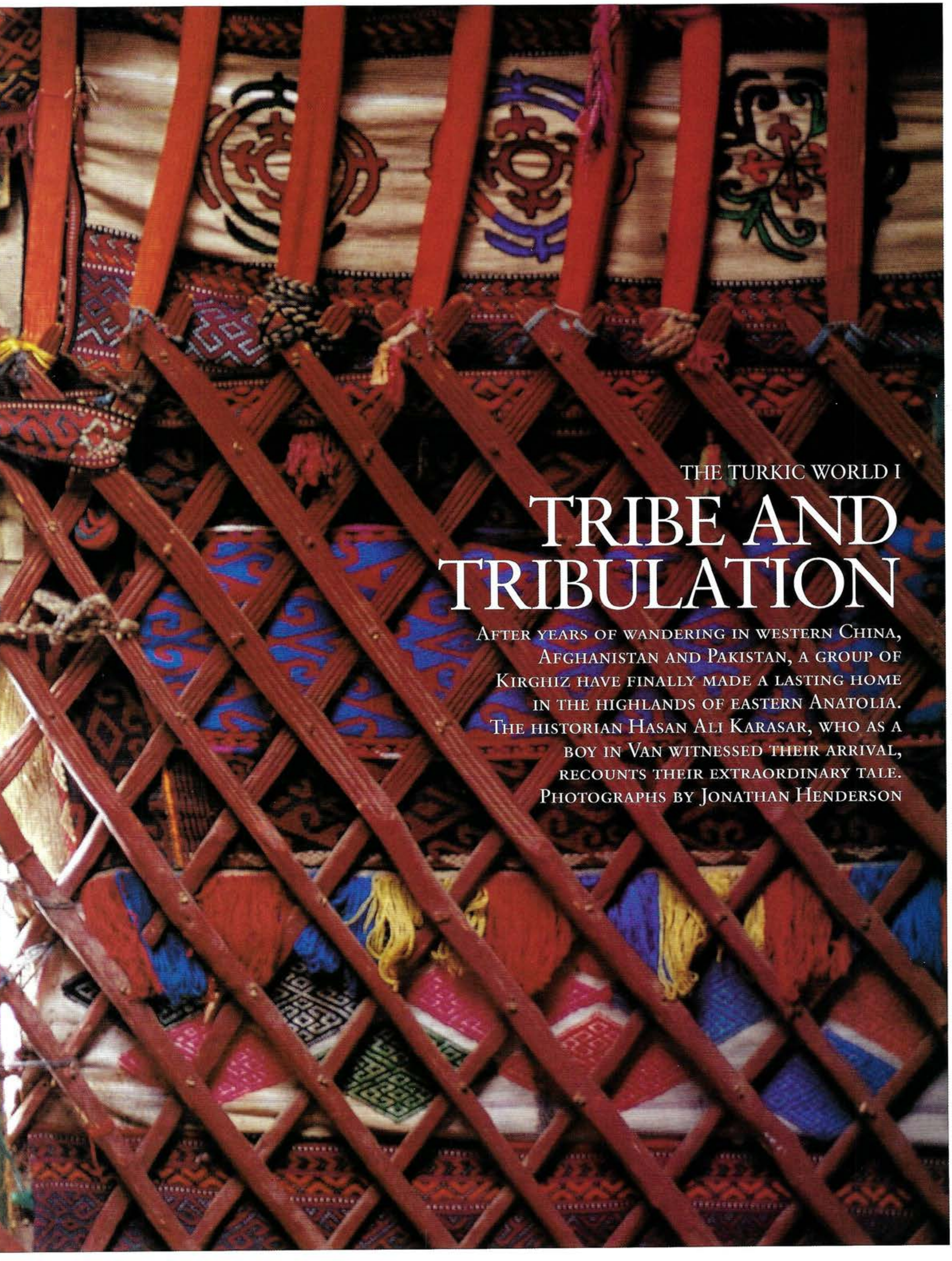
ANATOLIAN ANIMAL RUG
EARLY 14TH CENTURY

Above: this Seljuk rug, considered one of the greatest carpets ever made, was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum in New York in 1990, when it came out of a Buddhist monastery in Tibet newly destroyed by the Chinese. The rug is remarkable for its totemic power. The tall lion figures with lifted tails are reminiscent of the two-headed dragons in the fragment shown on the left. Within the larger lions are smaller lions with open mouths, set in panels in the form of two stylised birds. Several Seljuk animal rugs have emerged from ruined Tibetan monasteries, which shows that Turkish Anatolian carpets were traded far and wide, in the East as well as the West, from this period onwards.





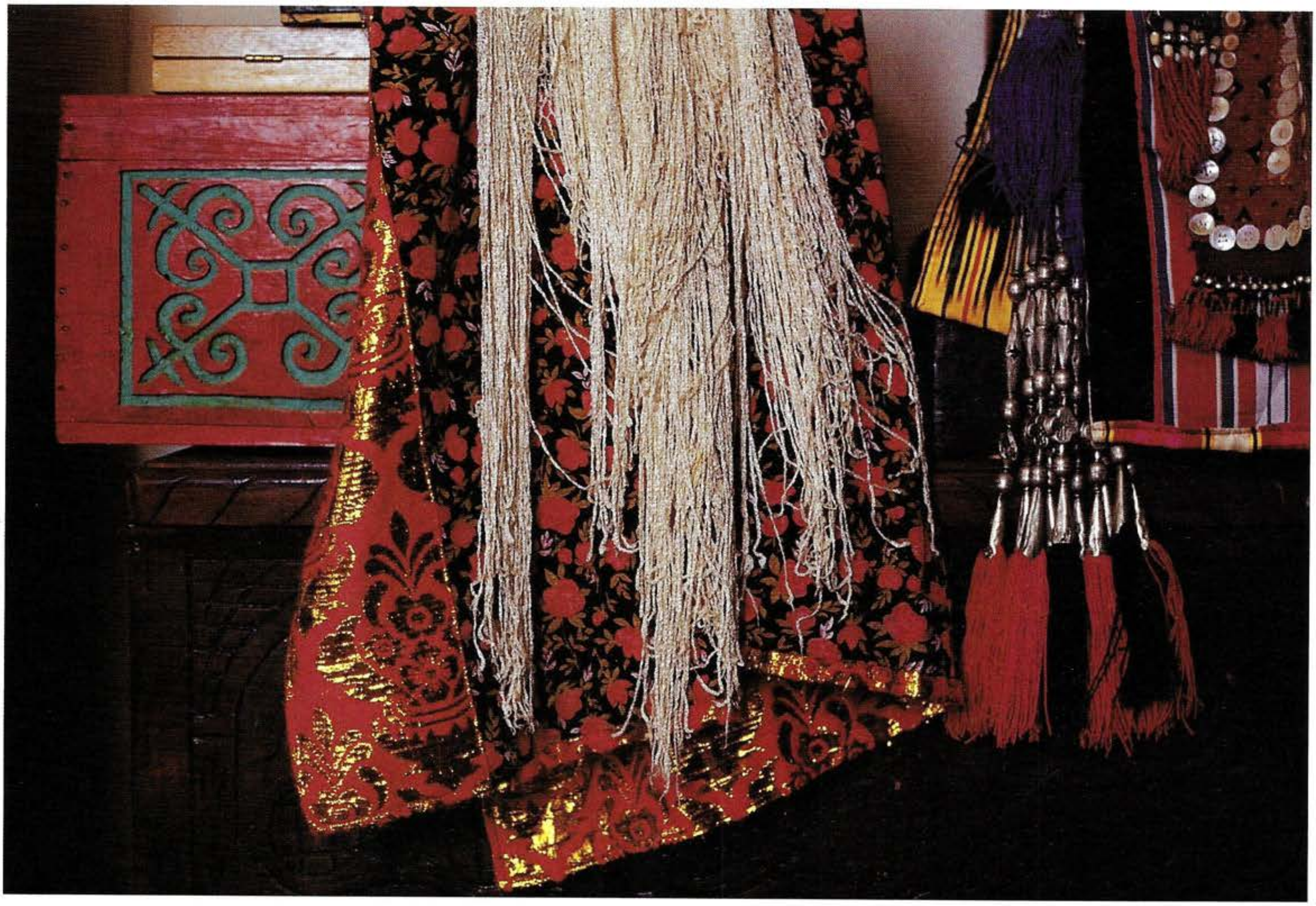
FRITZ VON DER SCHULENBURG © STAATLICHE MUSEEN ZU BERLIN, PREUßISCHER KULTURBESITZ, MUSEUM FÜR INDISCHE KUNST



THE TURKIC WORLD I

TRIBE AND TRIBULATION

AFTER YEARS OF WANDERING IN WESTERN CHINA, AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN, A GROUP OF KIRGHIZ HAVE FINALLY MADE A LASTING HOME IN THE HIGHLANDS OF EASTERN ANATOLIA. THE HISTORIAN HASAN ALI KARASAR, WHO AS A BOY IN VAN WITNESSED THEIR ARRIVAL, RECOUNTS THEIR EXTRAORDINARY TALE. PHOTOGRAPHS BY JONATHAN HENDERSON



THESE GORGEOUS FABRICS ARE TRAILS FROM HEADDRESSES THAT HANG ON A COAT RACK IN THE CORNER OF A FAMILY HOME. THEY ARE WORN BY WOMEN AT WEDDINGS, CELEBRATIONS AND HOLIDAYS. JEWELLERY TO GO WITH THEM IS KEPT IN THE RED BOX ON THE LEFT

A few years ago, eastern Anatolia acquired a piece of living archaeology in the newly built village of Ulu Pamir. To find it, drive northwards from the town of Van and turn off after eighty kilometres or so and you come to this Kirghiz village, whose inhabitants are a calling-card from the Turkic past. They are not just Kirghiz, from far away in Central Asia, on the Chinese border. They represent the Kirghiz way of life as it was before the Soviet Union all but extinguished it in the 1920s and 1930s.

The village was named Ulu Pamir, meaning Great Pamir, because the Kirghiz inhabited the Pamir mountain ranges of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. Nowadays, these former Soviet republics are independent states, but three generations of sovietisation reduced the Kirghiz culture there to little more than folklore. That is why musicologists and other people in search of authentic Kirghiz culture as it used to be descend on Turkey's Kirghiz village.

For the Turks and Kurds around Ulu Pamir, the Kirghiz must be as distinctive as are the Amish to the ordinary citizens of Pennsylvania. Women of obviously Asiatic origin shop in the small towns of the area dressed in traditional Kirghiz red skirts. But the villagers have no difficulty speaking good Anatolian Turkish. By a strange twist of migration dating back hundreds of years, Kirghiz is linguistically closer to Anatolian Turkish than are other Turkic languages, such as Kazakh or Uzbek, spoken in countries geographically nearer to Turkey.

The journey of this group of Kirghiz from the Pamir mountains to Anatolia was a long one (see page 72), precipitated in 1919 by a Bolshevik attempted assassination of their khan, Jabbar Kul Khan, and his son Rahman Kul. They and their tribe fled to China, but the power struggles of the twentieth century continued to buffet them about, tossing them to Afghanistan and

Pakistan in various degrees of comfort and privation. Rahman Kul finally brought his people to Van, Turkey's easternmost province, in 1982, which was when I first encountered them.

At that time both Pakistan and Turkey were under military rule. General Kenan Evren of Turkey and General Zia ul-Haq of Pakistan decided to co-ordinate an airlift to Adana, and to send the tribe on to Van, where they had been promised land, tractors and houses in a location similar to the Afghan Pamirs.

They were first put up in Karagündüz, a small village that had been built by the state on the shores of Lake Erçek following an earthquake in the 1970s. Local Turks had refused to live in the brick cubicles, preferring to use them for livestock. So the Kirghiz were settled there and left to their own devices until a new village on the northern tip of Lake Van was finished for them in 1989. The early days in Karagündüz were hard. I was brought up in Van and witnessed Kirghiz youths exchanging silver ornaments for bread and yoghurt to feed the children of the tribe. The state gave the village a ration of fuel and each adult a modest monthly handout, which caused resentment among the locals.

SEWING AT HOME: WEARING COLOURFUL CLOTHES AND SURROUNDED BY TRADITIONAL TEXTILES, THE WOMEN OF ULU PAMIR CONTINUE TO MAKE BLANKETS, CARPETS, BAGS AND HATS. THE WALL HANGING BEHIND IS A SAMPLE OF THE WEAVER'S ART

When the military regime was replaced by Turgut Özal's government, Rahman Kul visited Ankara several times, and petitioned for some kind of employment and education for his tribe. He adamantly refused to accept money from the state, wanting help instead with launching projects such as carpet-weaving and sheep-rearing. The state was less than enthusiastic.

Most of the children went to the village school and were surprisingly successful. Almost the whole village was able to read and write in both Arabic and Latin scripts. But secondary schools in Van were too far away for the children and the costs of education were high. Between 1983 and 1989, the village could afford to send only a dozen youths to state high schools.

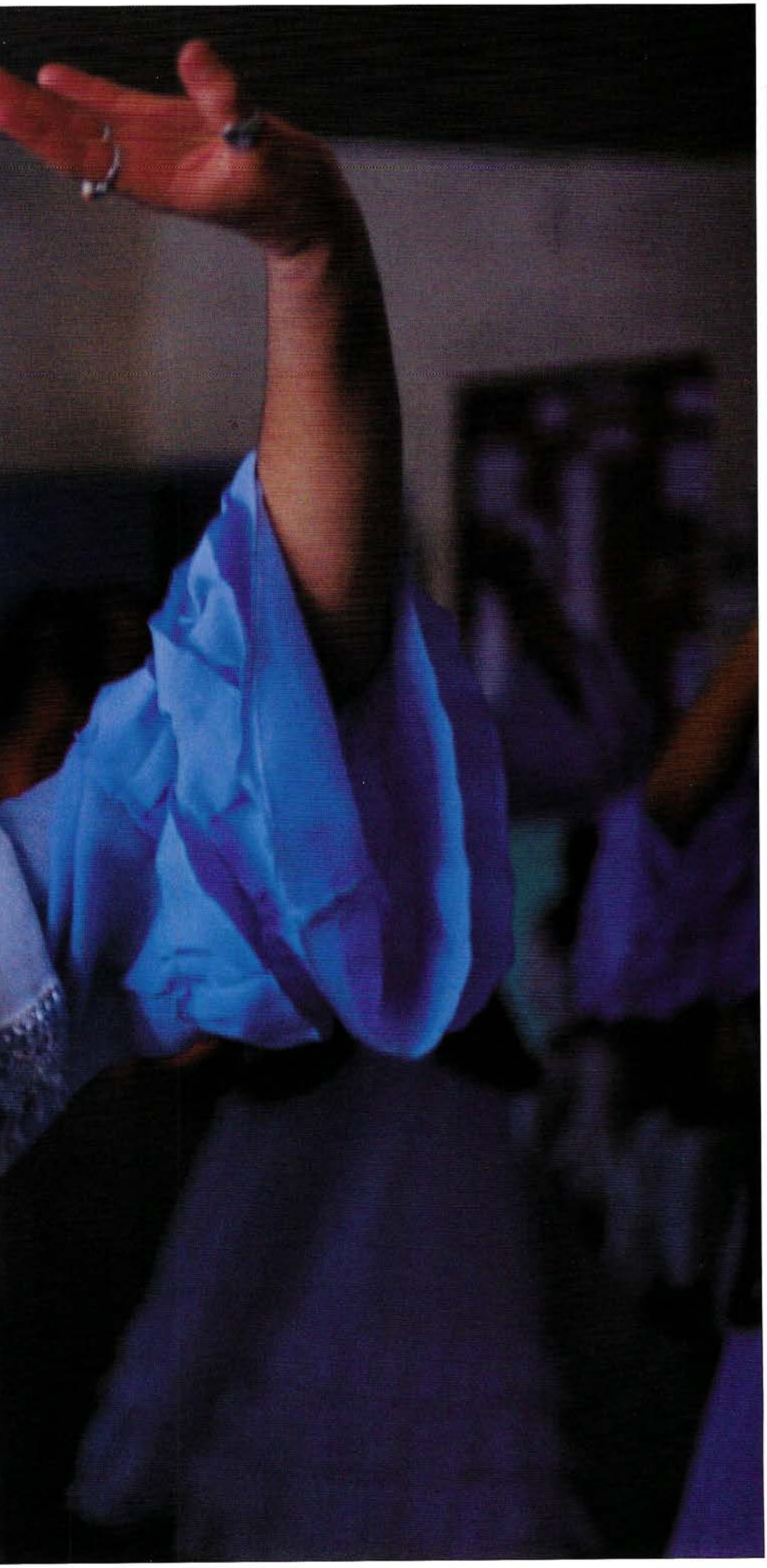
Two talented sons of Rahman Kul, Ekber, a sculptor, and Malik, a painter, succeeded in finding jobs at the newly established university in Van, and both gained international acclaim with exhibitions in Turkey and abroad. Ekber taught me sculpture when I was a teenager spending a good deal of time in Karagündüz.

Within a couple of years the Kirghiz had become used to village life in Karagündüz and established good relations with neighbouring villages. They did not complain when the tractors and livestock promised in the early 1980s failed to materialise. Indeed, they often asked me why the state kept giving them all that money but would not let them work. (In fact the handout was barely pocket money for a teenager.)

During this time, a local contractor was engaged to turn Altındere Harası, an old state collective farm in a remote mountainous area, into their new village. For six years the tribe lived in hope of moving there and of finally receiving their tractors and livestock. But meanwhile, Karagündüz became a pleasant, green place to live thanks to their hard work and love of nature.

I visited the Kirghiz in 1989, the first winter they spent in their new village of Ulu Pamir. As soon as my plane landed at Van airport and a freezing wind cut my lips, I realised how much I had missed this part of Turkey. I took the bus into the city, then a minibus to Erciş, on the northern shore of Lake Van. Seeing a couple of Asiatic figures in the middle of Erciş, I asked them to help me get to their village. We succeeded in reaching Ulu Pamir–Altındere, a journey of just thirty kilometres, towards midnight, after a six-hour drive in an overloaded minibus. The scene was heartbreaking. The village had no trees, just several

PREPARING TO DEMONSTRATE A TRADITIONAL WEDDING DANCE, A YOUNG GIRL IN A RED BRIDAL OUTFIT ADJUSTS A FRIEND'S HEADWEAR. AT THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT'S REQUEST, THE GOVERNMENT OF KYRGYZSTAN HAS APPOINTED A CULTURE AND ARTS TEACHER TO ENSURE THAT THE KIRGHIZ GROWING UP IN TURKEY LEARN THEIR TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND DANCES



dozen concrete houses and a mosque. There was no fuel to struggle with the freezing winter and there was a shortage of electricity. Pneumonia was rife. Snow was several feet deep even in the middle of the village.

Yet I was delighted to see the little Asiatic-looking children rushing off to school early in the morning. Despite all the difficulties, the elders and all my friends were grateful to the authorities for providing this last refuge for them. It was a permanent home for their people and the end of an age of exodus.

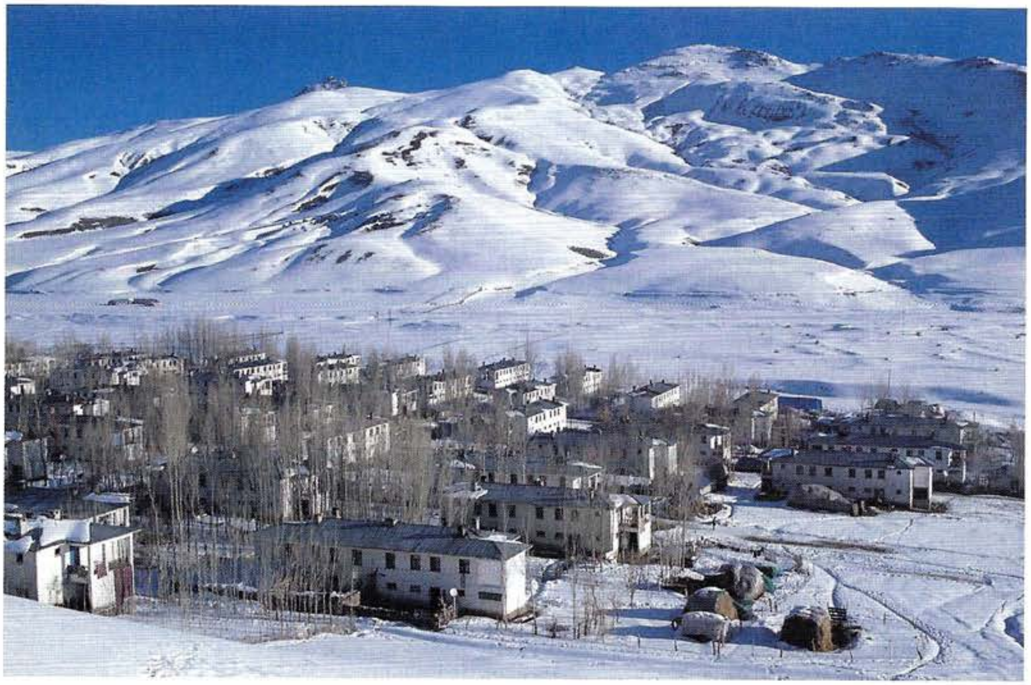
As newcomers to eastern Turkey, the Kirghiz were not welcome, and for the first half of the 1990s the village often came under heavy fire from Kurdish PKK terrorists. Many youngsters decided to arm themselves to save their village, joining the *korucu*, or state anti-guerrilla force. It required the diplomatic skills of the tribe's elders to avert a bloodbath.

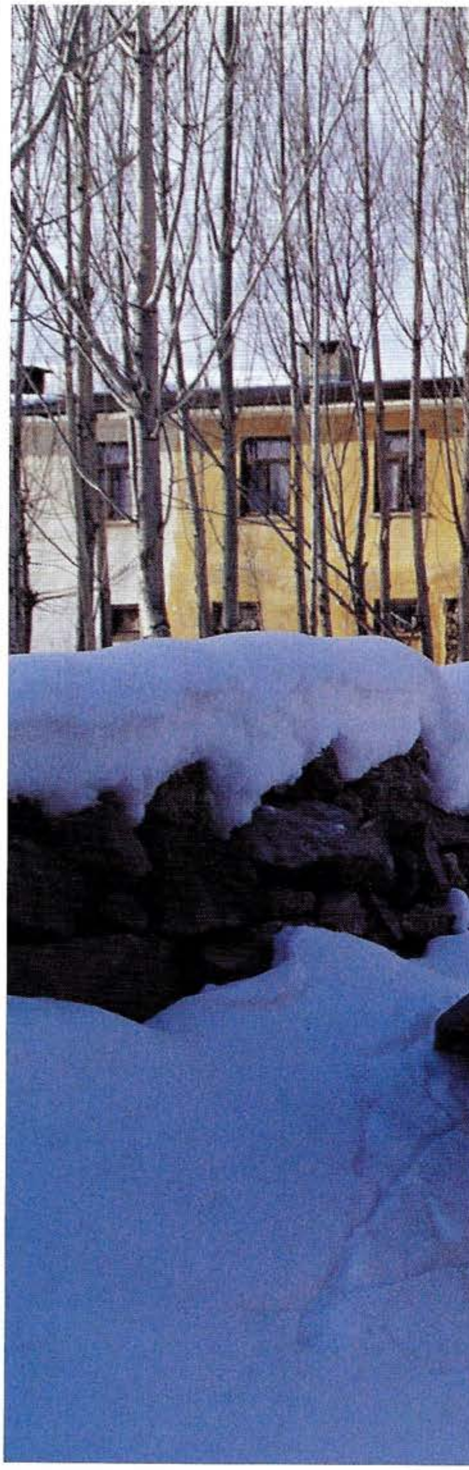
The school became an important cultural centre, and the village, unlike others in the area, had no problem in keeping its teachers, who were won over by Kirghiz hospitality. Kirghiz concerts were held and the Kirghiz epic *Manas* was staged.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union several wealthy members of the tribe visited independent Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz government even offered them limited aid and land. But apparently there was no desire to move yet again.

In Turkey the Kirghiz are known as "Afghans", which angers them. They call themselves Turkestanis and their language either Turkestani or Turki. (Some elders call it Çağatay [Chaghatai], the old name for the common Turkic language east of the Caspian.) They are Sunnis and members of the Hanefi Islamic order; although they have persistently fought to preserve their culture against godless communism, they are not excessively religious. Women enjoy

AT THE VILLAGE SCHOOL IN ULU PAMIR A GIRL IN A FACE-FRAMING HEADDRESS AND A FANCY WAISTCOAT – AND WITH RINGS ON HER FINGERS AND THUMBS – PERFORMS A GRACEFUL KIRGHIZ DANCE



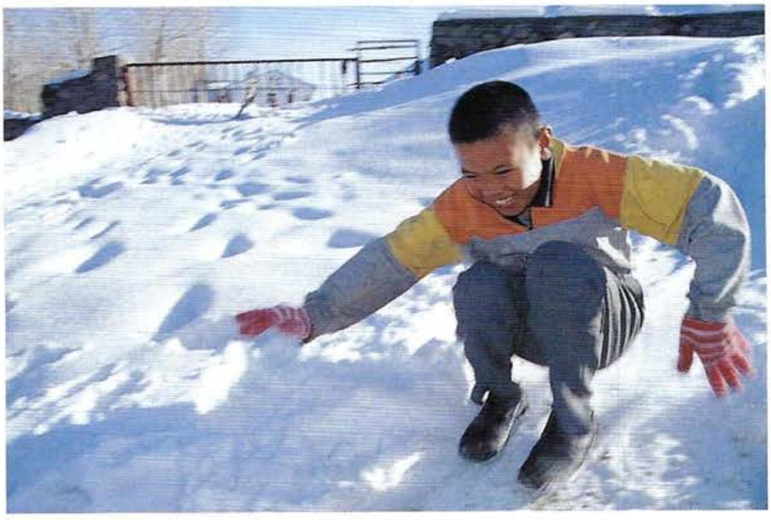


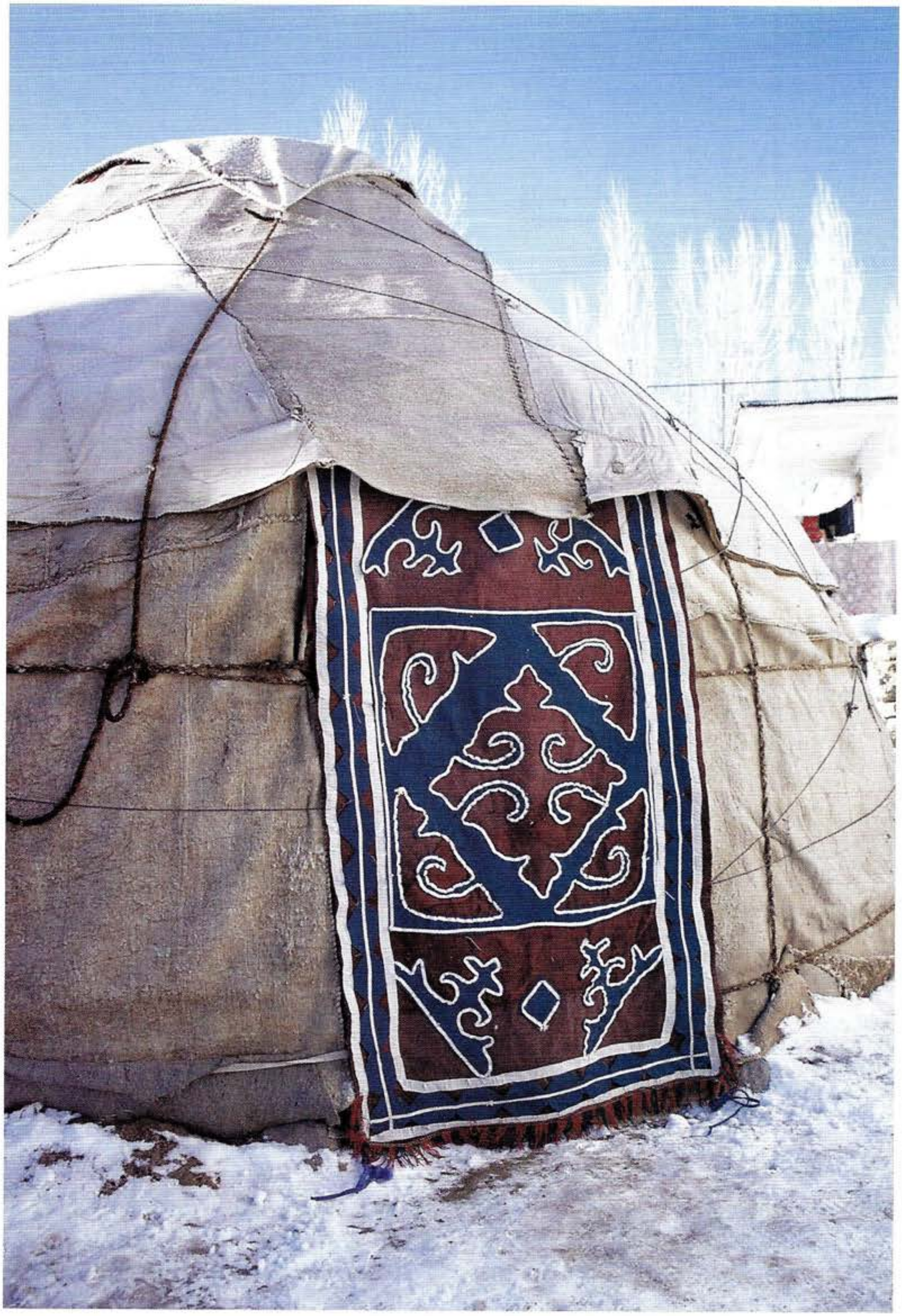
considerable freedom and may go away to be educated. Some of them also exercise a large degree of authority.

I returned to Ulu Pamir again last May with Professor Norman Stone to visit my friend and teacher Ekber Kul. We were impressed by the good English that was spoken in the village and by the dedication of the school's English teacher, who is a native Kirghiz. Hearing that Ekber had two interesting guests staying at his house, the school's music teacher,

TOP: TUCKED INTO EASTERN ANATOLIA'S HIGHLANDS, ULU PAMIR LIES BENEATH A BLANKET OF FEBRUARY SNOW.
ABOVE: IN THE FREEZING EARLY MORNING, A VILLAGER TAKES HAY FROM A BARN TO FEED SHEEP IN A NEARBY PEN

ABOVE: EVERY MORNING WOMEN ALL OVER THE VILLAGE BRING THEIR CARPETS OUTSIDE TO CLEAN. RUGS LIKE THIS ARE SHAKEN OUT. LARGER CARPETS ARE PLACED IN THE SNOW AND BEATEN WITH STICKS, TURNED OVER AND LAID ON A FRESH PATCH OF SNOW TO BE BEATEN AGAIN.
RIGHT: TOOTH INSPECTION. A SHEPHERD CHECKS THE HEALTH OF HIS SHEEP.
FAR RIGHT: SLEDGING ON SHOES. A BOY FINDS FUN ON A FOOTPATH WHERE SNOW HAS COMPACTED TO FORM A SLIPPERY SLOPE





a Soviet Kirghiz who has spent time in Moscow, turned up and spoke Russian with Stone.

Rahman Kul is dead now, and the village is more or less democratically ruled by his sons and the council of elders. It is a happy, picturesque mountain village, full of horses and greenery. It certainly contributes to the cultural and ethnographic beauty of eastern Turkey. Most families have acquired at least one horse, and the most popular game in the village is *boz keshi*, the traditional rugby-like game played on horseback (also known as *olagh tartush* or *kökböri* – the *kökböri* is the legendary Turkic grey wolf).

Many of the young people go to Istanbul, Ankara, Bursa or Malatya for seasonal jobs, but they all return home to their families at the end of the season. The village is potentially prosperous, too. Although they were badly affected by the economic crisis of 2002, the villagers have developed a leather industry. They make Kirghiz handicrafts, as well as beautiful rugs.

When we left, Ekber made the traditional gesture of presenting us with a *kalpak*, a Kirghiz fur hat, each. As we passed the cemetery I read a short Turkish prayer for the souls of Rahman Kul and fellow tribesmen buried in Ulu Pamir, who have come to rest so far from their homeland in the Pamirs.

◆

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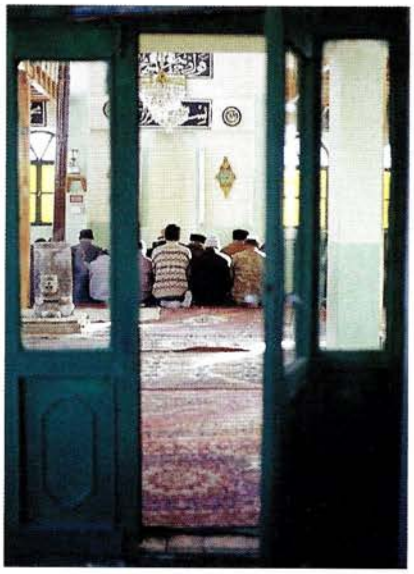
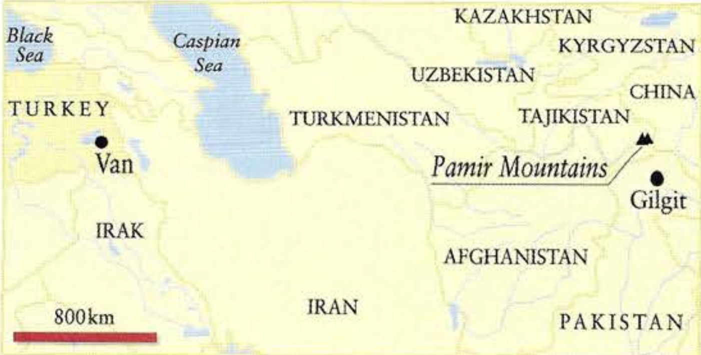
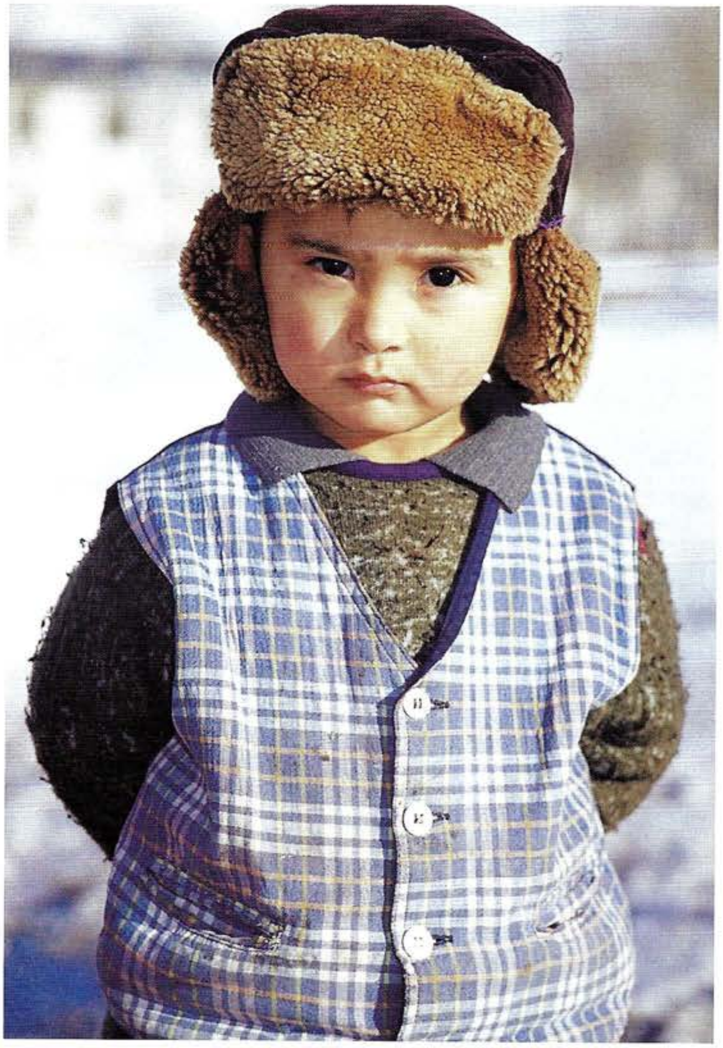


SUSANNA HICKLING

Above: exterior of the yurt shown on the opening pages. The embroidered door flap is made of felt. Above right: worshippers in the village mosque. The Kirghiz are Hanefi Sunnis. Far right: the imam, in black, leads the prayers





LEFT: A SERIOUS YOUNG BOY OUT FOR A WALK. RIGHT: A TEENAGER RIDES TO VISIT A FRIEND – HORSES OUTNUMBER CARS IN ULU PAMIR

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS: JONATHAN HENDERSON

THE STORY OF THE KIRGHIZ

The Kirghiz are a semi-nomadic Turki-speaking people from the old Turkistan borderlands of China, old Russia and Afghanistan. Stalin, in a spirit of divide *et impera*, drew the borders of Kyrgyzstan, as he did with the other Soviet Central Asian republics, right across the ethnic divides, scattering the Kirghiz between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan.

The Kirghiz do not migrate great distances. In the summer they take their flocks and wooden-framed felt yurts *(boz ooy)* up to the high mountain pastures of the Pamirs or the Tien Shan. When the approaching winter snows drive them down, they spend the winter in their solid stone-built houses, usually not more than thirty miles or so from the summer grazing grounds.

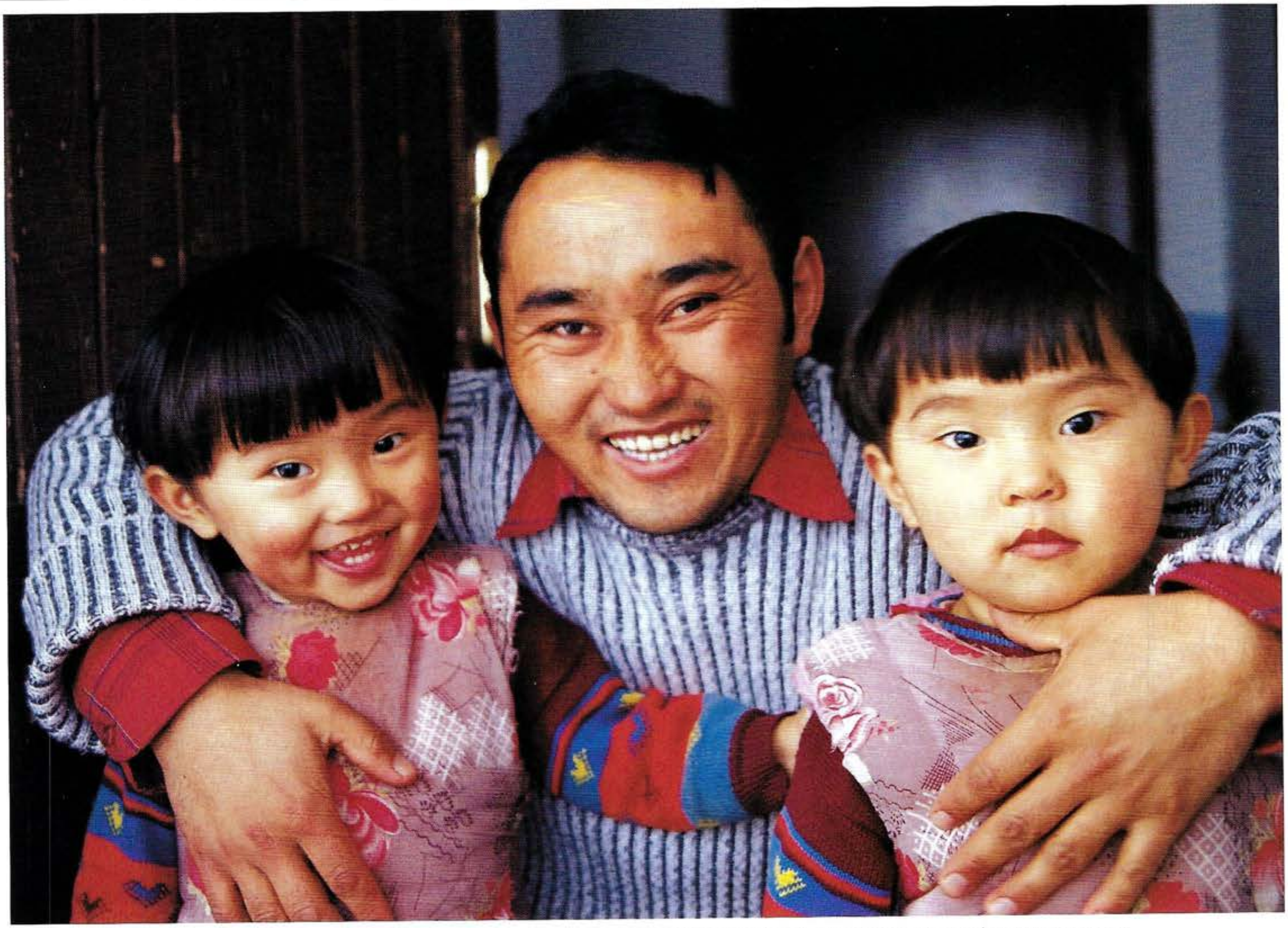
A much longer migration was made by a small group of Kirghiz from the Lesser Pamir in modern Tajikistan. In the 1920s the Bolsheviks started picking off the Kirghiz khans one by one. When they captured the last of them, Hajji Jabbar Kul Khan, they gave him and his son the choice of death by bullet or by poison. The two took poison and the Russians left them to die. Jabbar Kul Khan and his son crawled to a nearby house, where they were given bowls of *kurut* (dried yoghurt) mixed with water. They drank long draughts of it and managed to recover.

The two men had no wish to see their flocks collectivised, and they led their tribe, about 1,500-strong, to refuge in China among the Uighurs of Eastern Turkistan (Xinjiang). In 1933 the Russians invaded Chinese Turkistan, at the invitation of the Chinese, to put down a Basmachi revolt. The tribe went back to the Pamirs. More Russian attacks followed. In 1942 Jabbar Kul Khan died. His son Rahman Kul took his tribe to refuge once more in Chinese Turkistan, where they stayed until the arrival of the Communists in 1949. Again they had to move, this time to the Wakhan, the one place that was safe from Communists.

The Wakhan is the panhandle of Afghanistan high up in the Pamirs that formed a barrier between Russia, India and China. In 1891 the British had forced Amir Abdul Rahman of Afghanistan to take responsibility for the Wakhan, which had previously been an unmapped no-man's-land. He had no desire to take charge of such a remote place, "full of bandits" as he said, but the English required him to provide a neutral buffer between Russia and India.

Although safe from Stalin to the north and Mao to the south, the Wakhan was not an ideal refuge. It is all high summer pasture, far too cold for the winter, far from cultivation and civilisation and with little to feed livestock on. The sheltered winter grounds were inaccessible, low down beyond the borders on either side. In winter the Kirghiz shivered hungrily in their *boz ooys*. In the early 1970s André Singer made a very good documentary about Rahman Kul and his tribe in Afghanistan.

In 1978 the Kirghiz of the Wakhan



A PAINTER WITH HIS TWIN NIECES – THE KIRGHIZ, WHO CAME ORIGINALLY FROM NEAR CHINA, HAVE DISTINCTLY ASIATIC FEATURES

were alarmed by the arrival of Russian surveyors. Not waiting to be dispossessed once more, Rahman Kul led his people and their flocks down into Gilgit in Pakistan, where they had trading connections. About 300 of them died on the way. Shortly afterwards the Russians invaded Afghanistan, treating the remaining Kirghiz remarkably well. Although Rahman Kul's men were safe in Gilgit, the climate was too hot and unhealthy for these mountain people, and there was no grazing for their sheep. Rahman Kul had to sell most of them, keeping charge of the money himself.

With no means of livelihood left to them, the Kirghiz needed somewhere more suitable to live. An idea was briefly mooted by a UN wildlife conservationist that Alaska might be suitable, but it came to nothing. In 1982 Rahman Kul negotiated with the presidents Zia ul-Haq of Pakistan and Kenan Evren of Turkey, who arranged an airlift for the Kirghiz and the remainder of their flocks to Turkey. They were flown in military transports to Adana and from there were taken to the earthquake relief village of Karagündüz near Van, where they were allotted nearby grazing grounds.

This was not an ideal solution. The very basic earthquake shelters were empty because the local villagers found them suitable only for storage or sheep sheds. The grazing grounds allotted to the new arrivals by the local authorities were the traditional pastures of the local Kurds, who did not feel disposed to welcome the new arrivals. In 1987 the Özal government arranged for the 300 Kirghiz families to be moved to Zilandere near Erciş, where the new village of Ulu Pamir was built for them. Rahman Kul Khan spent the last four years of his life in Ulu Pamir and died there aged seventy-seven. It is remarkable how easy the Turki spoken by the Kirghiz was for Turkish speakers to follow, unlike Kazakh or Uzbek.

The 200-odd Kirghiz families who remained in Afghanistan are in a sorry state. They are illiterate, and they and their khans are given to smoking opium grown in Badakhshan. They are prevented by the Russian border guards in Tajikistan from crossing the Oxus border to visit their kinsmen to trade. The Little Pamir Kirghiz in Tajikistan are better off and able to trade with Gilgit in Pakistan and Tash Kurgan in Xinjiang. Two Kirghiz mullahs came back from Turkey to encourage them in the faith, but they quickly succumbed to the charms of the opium pipe.

The Kirghiz herdsmen who remained under Soviet rule did not do badly. Once the Russians had got rid of their khans, they provided them with education and healthcare. The Kirghiz even fought loyally for Russia in the Panfilovski Brigade at Stalingrad. Unless the Americans have just had them pulled down, the statues of Lenin, Panfilov and General Frunze, who won Turkistan back for the Russians after the Bolshevik Revolution, still stand in the Kyrgyzstan capital of Bishkek.

ANTONY WYNN

Antony Wynn is the author of *Persia and the Great Game: Sir Percy Sykes, Explorer, Consul, Solder, Spy*, available to CORNUCOPIA subscribers at £9.50 including p&p (see www.cornucopia.net)

THE TURKIC WORLD II

SPEECHLESS IN SAMARKAND

THE MOST WONDROUS TILED DOME, THE BIGGEST AND BEST-EVER FOOD BAZAAR, THE MOST HANDSOME MAN IN THE WORLD... UZBEKISTAN, AS MIN HOGG DISCOVERS, INSPIRES A PROFUSION OF SUPERLATIVES, EVEN IF SHE TANGLES WITH THE TRANSPORT. IN SAMARKAND, TAMERLANE'S FABLED CAPITAL, SHE FINDS HERSELF LOST FOR WORDS. PHOTOGRAPHS BY MIN HOGG

TOP: A PARK GARDENER IN BUKHARA. ABOVE: VISITORS TO SAMARKAND'S SHAH-I ZINDA TOMBS. OPPOSITE: AN INTRICATELY TILED PULPIT IN A MOSQUE IN KHIVA

The Silk Road, Samarkand, the River Oxus – what words to set the pulse racing. As we landed in Uzbekistan last March, the anticipation of unlocking their promise was exceedingly keen.

There are five 'stans': Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkmen and Tajik, but until 1924, when Stalin sliced them up into separate republics, this huge land-mass sandwiched between Russia to the north and India, Iran and Afghanistan to the south, had been lumped together as Central Asia, part of the USSR. The carve-up could not be done on strictly ethnic principles because for 2,000 years conquerors from all points of the globe had marauded the area with their armies, depositing their peoples in passing, and, in the case of the Turks, their language too. Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Tamerlane and Stalin himself are just a few who attempted to govern this steppe and its unruly nomadic tribesmen.

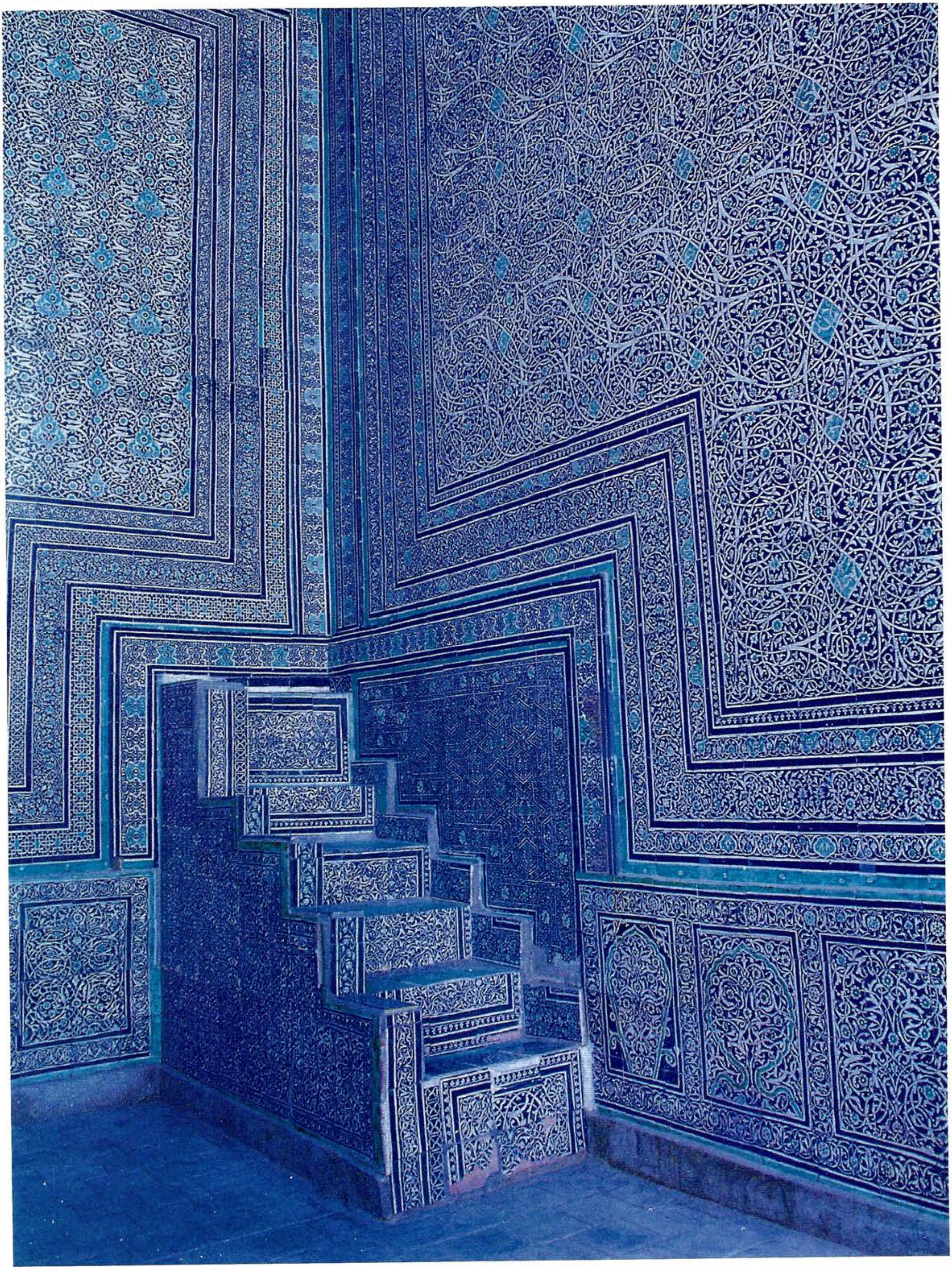
The moment a traveller lands in Tashkent, the Uzbek capital, the melange of races becomes evident in the faces of its people: Mongols, Turks, Persians, Slavs and Orientals mingle in one nation, but with individual ethnicity shining through.

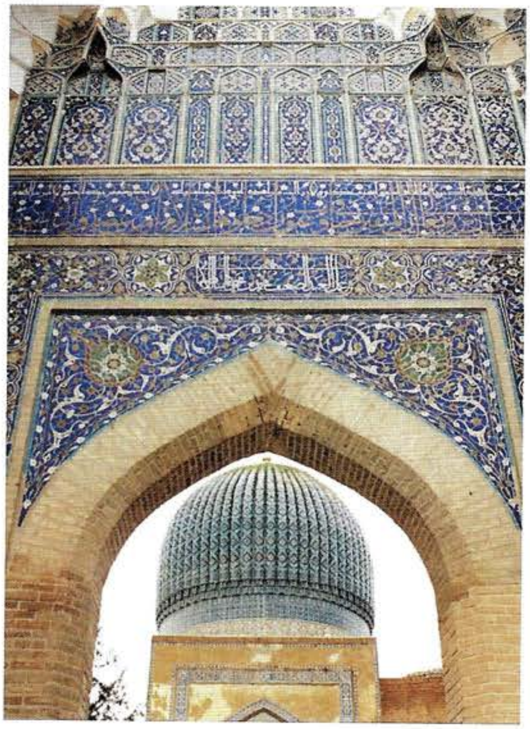
The boulevards typical of any former Russian republic are hugely wide, tree-lined and straight, built as though their sole purpose is to nobilitate a presidential motorcade. Now there is almost no traffic, but happily, since independence in 1991, the exterior of many a demoralising concrete block of Soviet apartments has been subverted with a coat of paint in chalky pale blue, green or pink – a transformation I highly recommend to the rest of the world.

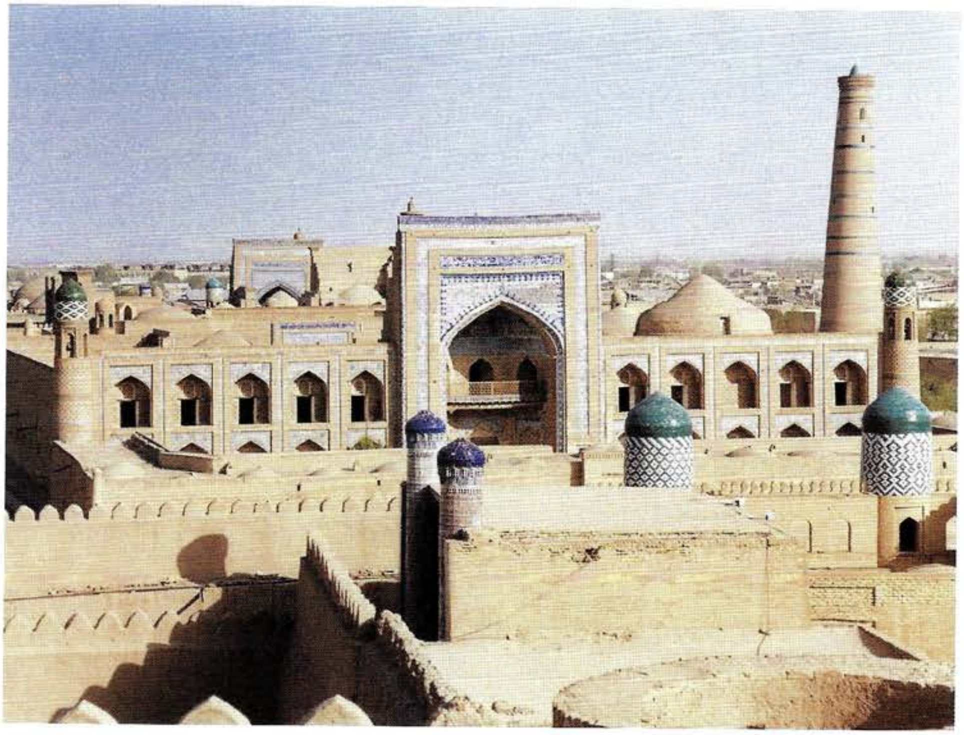
In flat, flat, flat country the almond orchards are in full blossom; other trees have about them that luminous aurora of green indicating that their leaves will burst forth this very day. Behind pierced concrete walls, also painted in jolly colours, are tempting glimpses of what must be ramshackle old Tashkent, but we sweep past to the Intercontinental Hotel. In its obligatory atrium I change sixty euros into *sum*, the local currency. As she hands me a wad of notes so thick I can hardly grasp it, my cashier warns that I will never spend this much in a month of Sundays. I immediately prove her wrong by spending nearly all of it on an exorbitant guidebook and some postcards on the other side of the hall.

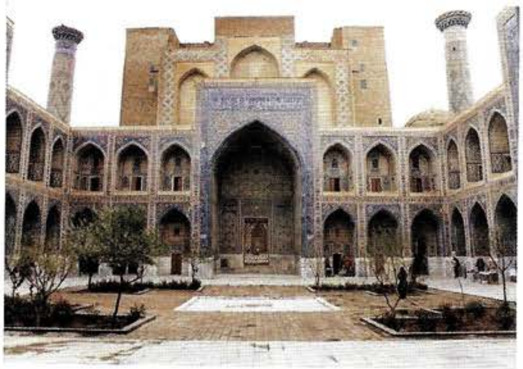
We set off with our Tashkent chaperone, Adalina, a pretty young Russian girl betrothed to a man in New Jersey whom she has met only twice. Between the statistics so beloved by guides, she imparts the useful tip that to get about in town you just have to hail any passing private car and, if the driver is willing, you will, for a price, be taken to your destination. I am determined to try it.

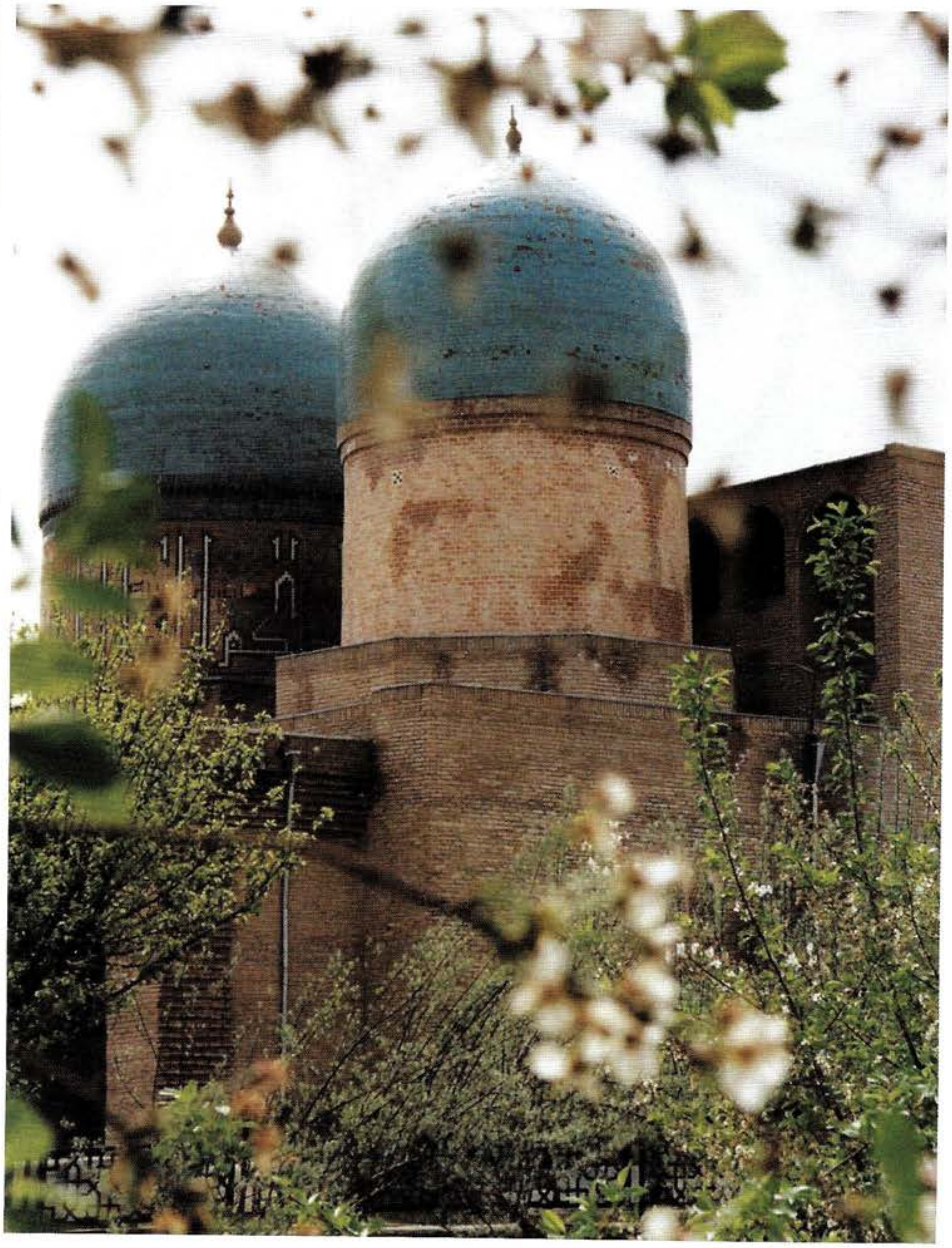
At the Fine Arts Museum we dash with unseemly haste through Grand Duke Romanov's impounded collection of Russian icons, sculpture and paintings, many said to have been stolen by the Grand Duke – an exiled cousin of the Tsar – from the Hermitage in St Petersburg, and arrive at the Uzbek displays of heavenly cloths, woven or stitched, lettering and pottery. Here one begins to understand how the to-ing and fro-ing of colonisation and trade have





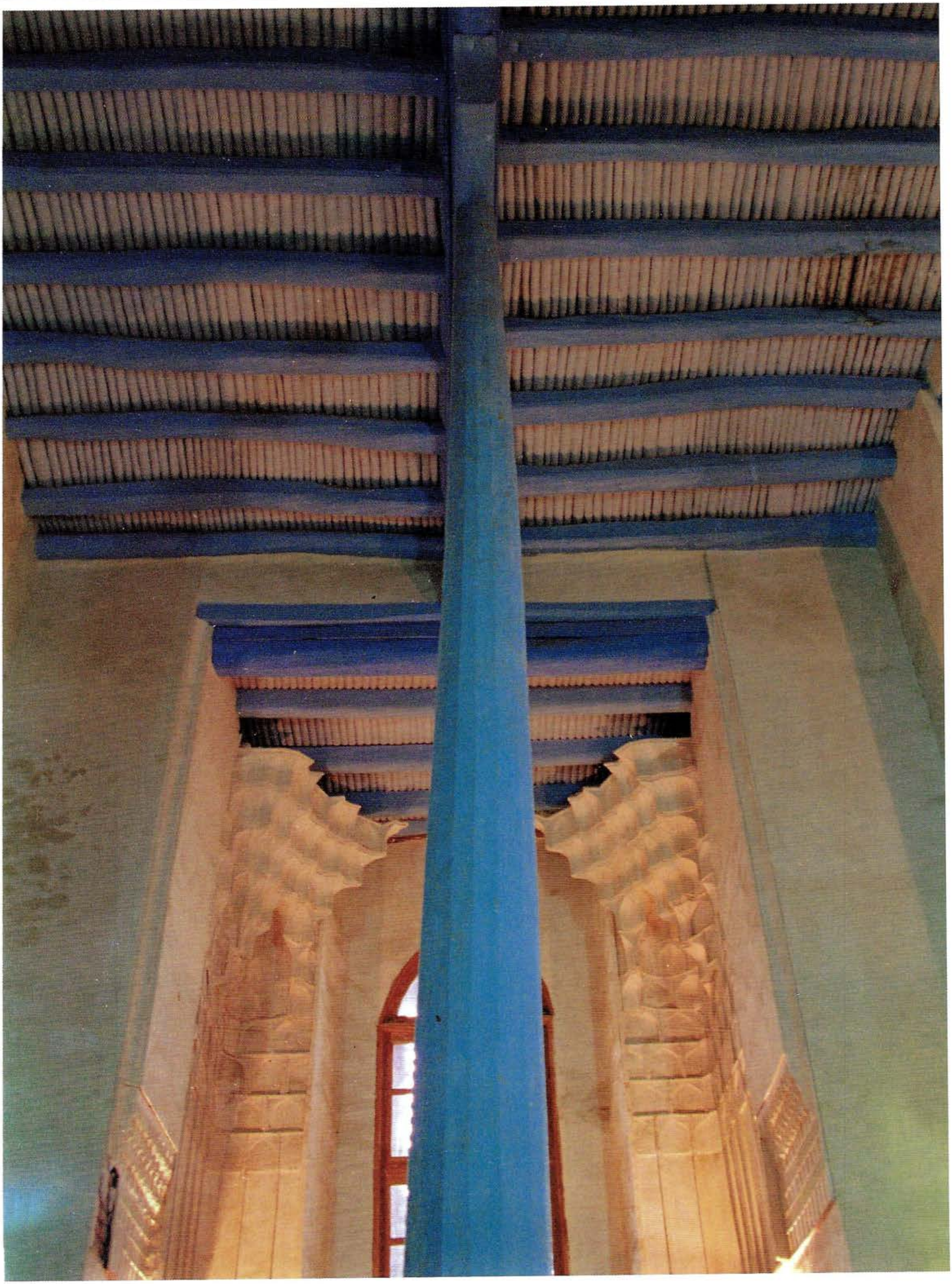


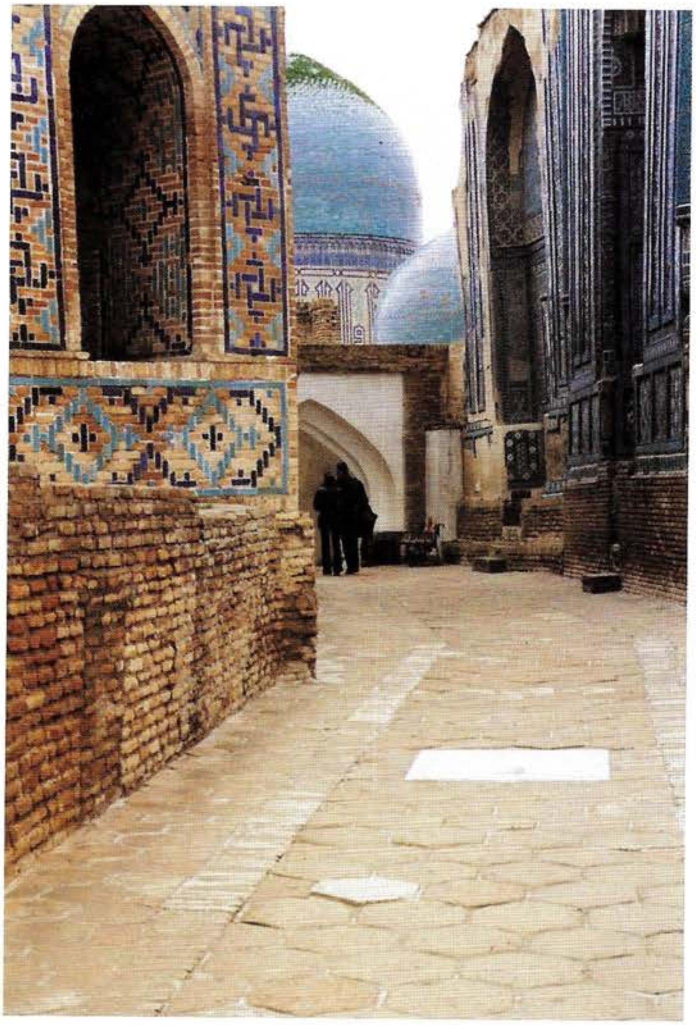


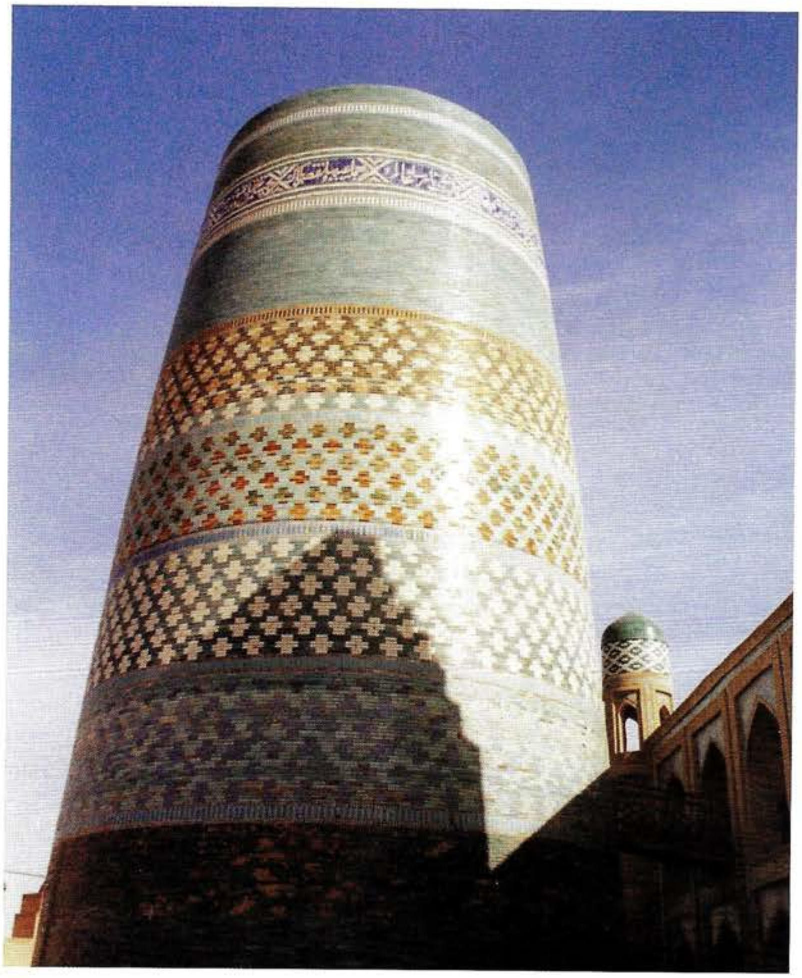


'A SKYLINE BUBBLING WITH BLUE DOMES'

TAMERLANE'S CITIES ARE FABLED FOR THEIR GLORIOUS DOMES. TOP LEFT: HIS OWN TOMB, THE GUR EMIR IN SAMARKAND, HAS A DOME WITH 64 FLUTES COVERED IN TURQUOISE TILES. HIS TOMBSTONE IS A SLAB OF SOLID JADE. ABOVE: IN THE CITY'S MASTERPIECE, REGISTAN SQUARE, GRAND RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS ARE NOW CHOCK-A-BLOCK WITH BOUTIQUES. TOP RIGHT: DOMES OF COBALT, TURQUOISE AND GREEN STAND OUT AGAINST KHIVA'S SAND-COLOURED CRENELLATIONS. RIGHT: TWO OF THE TURQUOISE DOMES THAT CROWN THE OASIS CITY OF SHAHRISABZ, WHERE TAMERLANE WAS BORN. OPPOSITE: A POPLAR PAINTED IN TURQUOISE BLUE SERVES AS A COLUMN IN A SIMPLE MOSQUE







seeped into Central Asian artistic expression. There are glorious shadow-printed ikat silks that could be Turkish, beautiful serpentine calligraphy incised and painted on plaster, perhaps Arabian, velvets encrusted with gold needlework that look Persian, glowing silks stitched into intricate geometric or trailing flower patterns in which I can see an Indian influence. They make one sigh with pleasure and admiration.

Next we join the crowds for a stroll in a park curiously known as Broadway, where there are bandstands and stalls for food, toys, clothes and glittery kitsch, together with unveiled Uzbek women in the national costume of long printed velvet coat-dress, black leather boots, bright headscarf and top and bottom sets of golden teeth that add semaphore flashes to their conversation.

In the museum of Uzbek history – a drab Soviet building that attempts an Uzbek look with filigree walls in cast cement, but which seems as if it would collapse in the most minor seismic event, and whose cavernous halls are lit by the deathly glow of single light bulbs – clutches of women seated in corners embroider and bead tourist bracelets. They have no compunction about distracting us from the exhibits, hoping for a sale. Here the costumes are a wonder to behold, the men's marginally more magnificent than the women's. The striped silk or figured velvet coats with their extravagant sashes, skull caps and turbans make one realise once again what a sorry influence Western dress has been in so many parts of the world.

For dinner, we pile into several taxis. "Granny, you been in film?" asks my driver, and I am not sure whether to preen or scowl, but our destination, the Caravan Art Café, looks promising. Hanging over the back of each chair is a striped padded silk *chapan*, or coat, and soon we understand why – we are in a semi-open courtyard and it is freezing. Even wearing the coats we shiver and have to regroup inside, where fires are blazing. The sausage-shaped meat with chips is delicious.

After the desolation of Soviet town planning, the village atmosphere of old Tashkent is a blessed relief. Here there are unpaved lanes beside meandering canals, with willows trailing in the water and dense organic clusters of houses built from mud and straw packed round fan-shaped skeletons of wood. Some have verandas in front, others give no clue as to the shape of things inside; anything that can be is painted turquoise blue. Occasionally a carved wooden door is open to reveal a blue-tiled passageway leading to a garden with raised sleeping pavilions, vine pergolas and fruit trees. A wedding feast is in preparation: chattering women and children emerge from houses bearing aloft trays of food covered in white cloths.

Wandering on, we head for the library of the Tellya Sheikh Mosque, where we peer reverentially at the Osman Koran. Dating from 655 AD, it is possibly the world's oldest. Its floppy gazelle-skin pages, elegantly inscribed in black ink, are stained with the blood of a fourteenth-century murdered caliph – we are not allowed to touch.

The lunch table is laden with dozens of small bowls of salads, a recurring theme in Uzbek menus. Chopped into julienne strips, they are mixtures of beetroot, carrot, radish and cucumber with mild dill pickles and creamy white cheese. The meal is rounded off by chicken soup, fish and meringues.

Fortified, we make for the Chorsu Bazaar, Tashkent's largest, where we lose each other in the milling throng. Hectare after hectare of covered and open spaces is jammed with traders, each product with its own section. No tourist trash or antiques here; this is the place for goods and chattels, fish, fruit, veg, clothes, honey, herbs, cheese, bread, nuts, bolts and brushes. I haggle over a pair of soft black leather boots and am no doubt swindled a little, but the man who sells them to me is so cheerfully dashing, and the boots so supple, that our satisfaction is mutual. In one corner pairs of Uzbek women are apparently waltzing; on closer inspection, they are not dancing, but each is holding up in front of her a dress suspended on a kind of a frame to advertise its desirability. The dresses in jewel colours and prints on velvet are, sad to say, all made of polyester. Cotton and silk are major crops in this country, so their virtual absence in women's clothing is most upsetting. I cheer myself up at the aromatic bread-sellers' section, where each loaf, or *non*, is about the size of a large dinner plate and incised with a design that denotes its seasoning. Ripping into one becomes a frequent guilty pleasure.

Recklessly hailing a passing car for a lift is only a partial success. When my driver comes up against a roadblock some distance from the hotel, he dumps me and I have to trudge the last mile on foot – alone.

From the tiny Fokker aeroplane we board for the hop west from Tashkent

LIFE AND COLOUR HAVE RETURNED TO TASHKENT (THE SOVIET-ERA CAPITAL), SAMARKAND (TAMERLANE'S CAPITAL) AND TO KHIVA, WHICH IS DENSE WITH PALACES, MOSQUES AND MEDRESES. FEW SURFACES ARE LEFT UNEMBELLISHED. CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PILLARS IN THE HAREM OF KHIVA'S 19TH-CENTURY TASH HAULI PALACE ARE TYPICALLY INTRICATE; A WOMAN IN TASHKENT'S VAST CHORSU BAZAAR, WHICH SELLS EVERYTHING FROM FOOD TO GAUDY HANDMADE CLOTHES; THE GEOMETRIC BRICKWORK OF SAMARKAND'S SHAH-I ZINDA TOMBS; PATTERNED LOAVES CALLED 'NON' ARE THE SIZE OF DINNER PLATES IN CHORSU BAZAAR; SOME OF THE FEW REMAINING PLAIN MOSQUE PILLARS IN KHIVA; THE KALTA MINARET, LIKE MUCH ELSE IN KHIVA, HAS BEEN ZEALOUSLY RESTORED; IKAT SILKS IN TASHKENT'S FINE ARTS MUSEUM. THIS PAGE: THE FAST-DIMINISHING OXUS RIVER FLOWS THROUGH THE KYZYL (KIZIL) KUM DESERT

to Khiva, I can see, in an infinite café-au-lait landscape, many wiggly dry river beds, animal or cart tracks between villages, diminishing lakes with salty white edges and great tracts of ridged desert pockmarked by what look like bunkers for giant golfers. Near our destination we fly over the Amu Darya, or as most of us know it the Oxus, a great sprawling river whose precious life-giving waters rise in the Hindu Kush and flow across Uzbekistan to replenish the inland Aral Sea. Except that overplundering for irrigation means that the river no longer reaches the sea; it peters out well short, and an ecological disaster is in progress. As the Aral shrinks, it leaves lethal mineral deposits in its wake that poison the soil. But travelling along the road to Khiva, lined with turquoise-blue telegraph posts, one sees how devastating it would be to deprive these people of the water they are siphoning off the Oxus. The quandary is heartbreaking. Rice paddies, cotton fields and orchards in full bloom stretch to the horizon. Most fields are hedged by knobbly pollarded mulberry trees. There is something about the tenderness of Uzbek mulberry leaves that makes silkworms produce the finest of threads.

Appealing as it is, the legend that Khiva's city walls were staked out by Noah's son, Shem, is less convincing than the presence in this desert oasis of an inexhaustible sweet-water well at which trade caravans on the Silk Road have stopped to refresh themselves since commerce began.

Khiva's history is a horrifying one of clashing nomadic tribes, murder, slave trading, treachery and astounding cruelty: late into the nineteenth century the reward for producing a sackful of severed enemy heads was one or more silk-embroidered coats, presented by the Khan. Yet here is a largely medieval city, expressing in its tightly packed palaces, minarets, mosques, domes, medreses, harems and workshops all the craftsmanship, splendour and artistic genius of Central Asian culture, protected behind an epic sixteen-metre castellated wall of baked mud buttressed by rounded turrets.

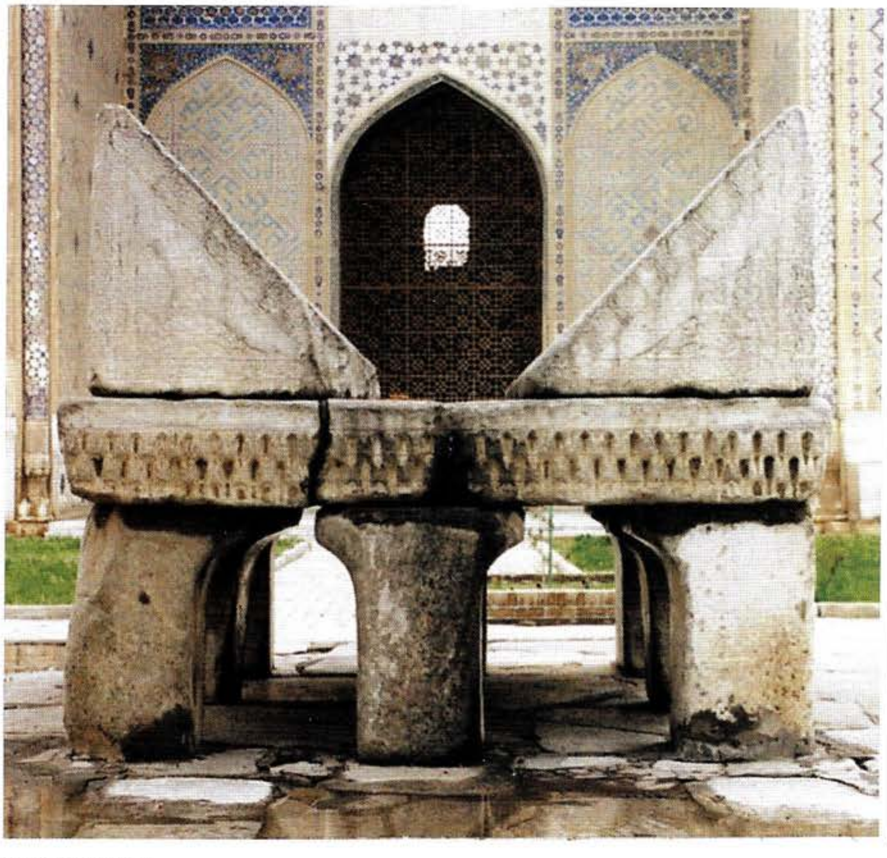
To the untrained eye it is virtually impossible to date an Uzbek building, materials, method of construction and outline having changed little since the tenth century. Baked bricks that match exactly the colours of the desert beyond are the basic material; it is the patterns in the vivid turquoise and cobalt blue tilework cladding that distinguish one from another. In soft afternoon sunshine we drink in the diversity and forget the names of all these buildings. A tethered camel obliges me by frothing at the mouth when I look him in the eye. A fur-hat merchant hits the jackpot when three of our party buy twenty shaggy Mongolian lamb *cholomas* for $14 each, in which we resemble a cross between Jimi Hendrix and a Buckingham Palace guardsman – what a comfort this headgear must be when it's minus 30 degrees.

During Khiva's somewhat over-zealous restoration, the population was ejected, which left the city a beautiful but rather soulless place. Now people are seeping back to live and work here, and its respectful museum atmosphere will soon revert to hustle and bustle.

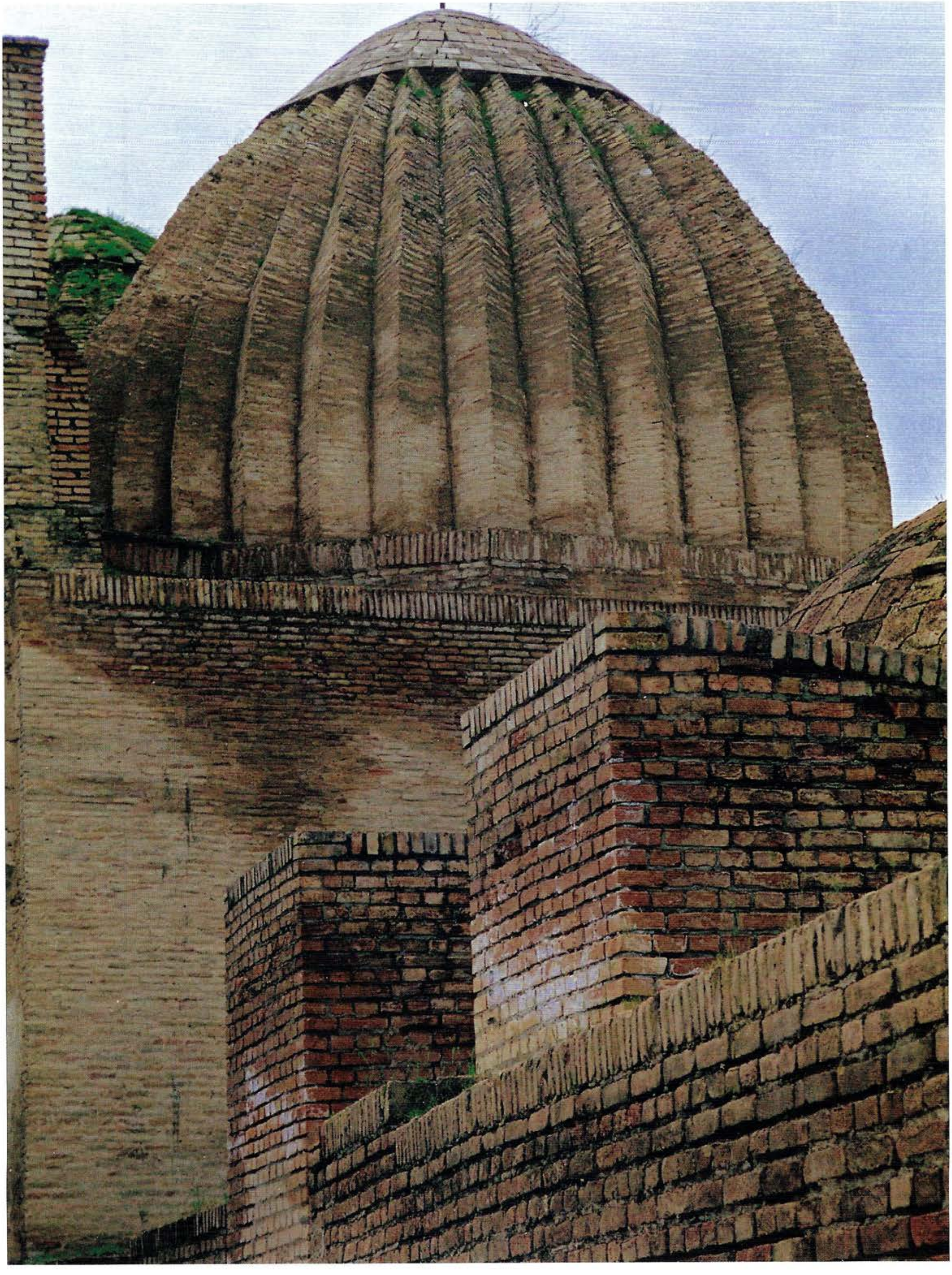
Dinner is one of those excruciating, if impeccably hospitable, affairs in a private house, silently served by the family under a punishing chandelier. However, the *plov* (lamb and *pilav* rice) and the *manty* (steamed meatballs wrapped in gossamer-thin dumplings) are just the job.

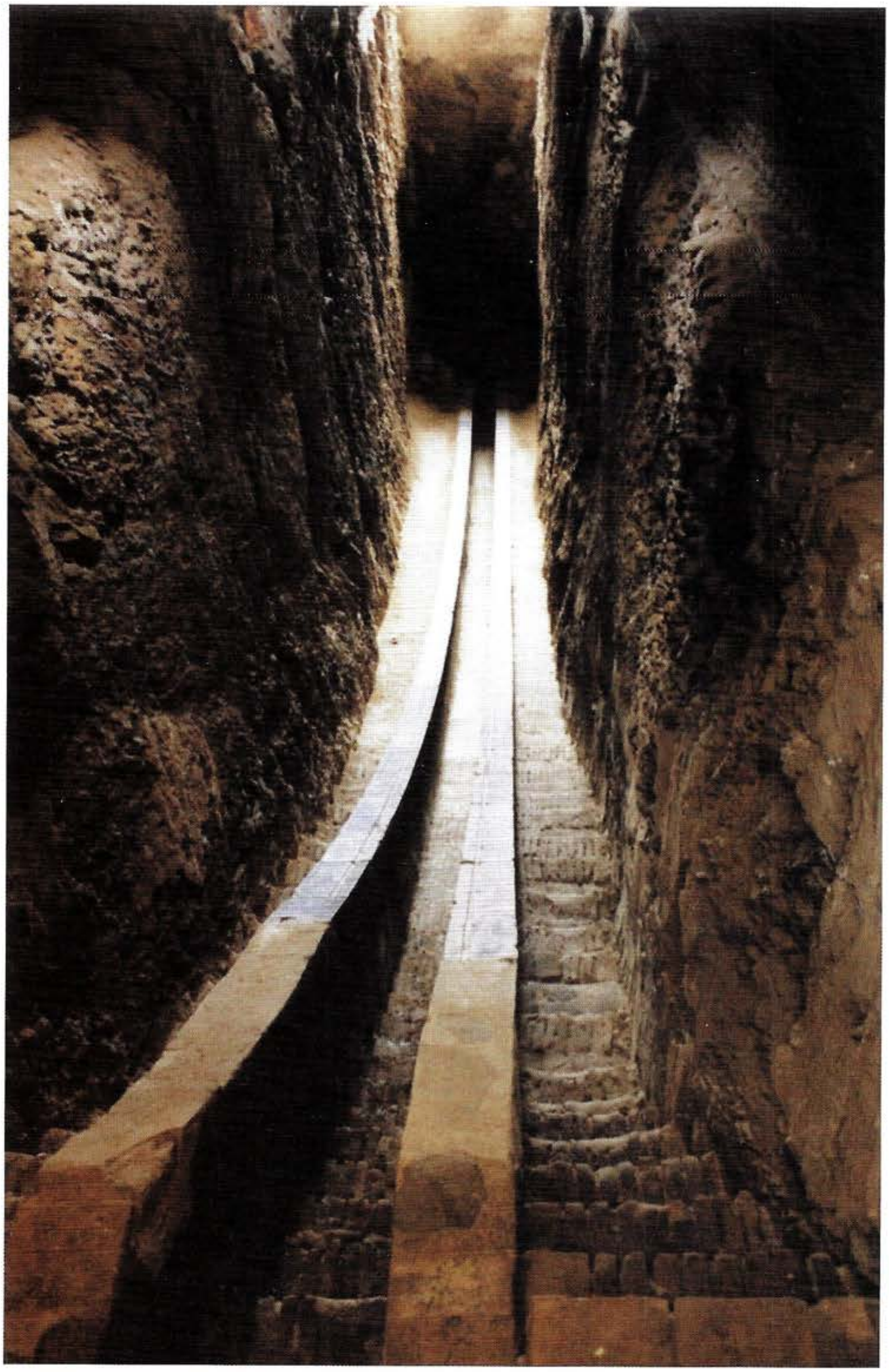
The journey between Khiva and Bukhara crosses the Kyzyl Kum Desert in a dead-straight line, the road ahead forever vanishing over the horizon like a lesson in perspective drawing. As we cross the Oxus, soldiers strut about watching out for any illicit photography on our part, which makes us more determined to thwart their efforts. We stop a little further on, to get out of our bus and admire the river's width and slow pale-blue path across the dun-coloured land. This is not golden sand-dune desert, more a scrubby brown, flat place which only on close inspection reveals its teeming plant and animal life: minuscule yellow flowers with purple centres, black velvet lilies, scampering furry mongoose-like creatures that disappear into burrows, and the droppings of something worryingly much larger. The wind makes a *swish-swish* sound through thorny bushes.

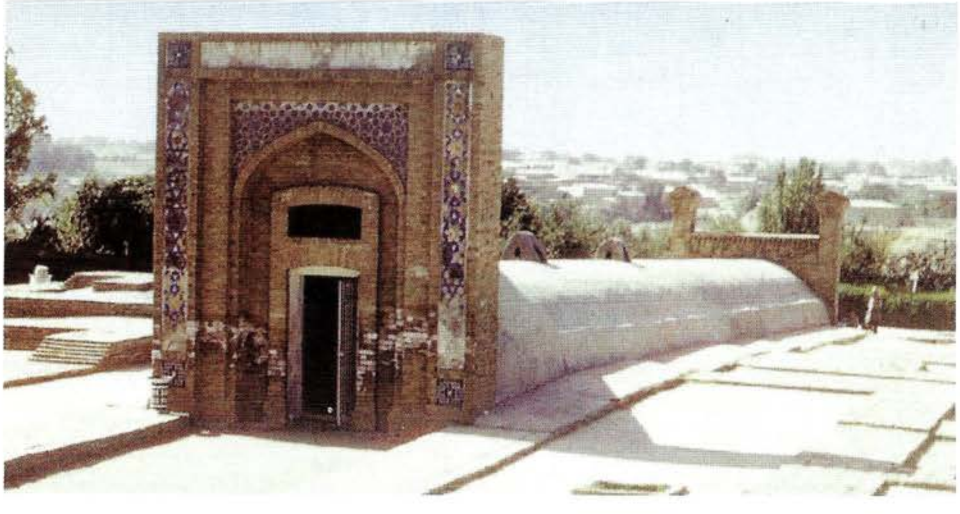
Suddenly a lone building looms. A sandstorm blows up and, heads down,



Samarkand is full of curiosities. Left: Tamerlane had this lectern built to hold the world's oldest Koran; it is in the 1398 Bibi Hanim Mosque, for which 95 camels lugged marble all the way from India. Opposite: the ribbed brick dome of Emir Hussein's tomb in the Shah-i Zinda necropolis







we battle our way into the house for lunch. The room shimmers in palest duck-egg blue gloss paint with a darker stencilled frieze. A railway carriage is tacked on as an extension, and to the side a big hot kitchen where the women bake in a clay oven flat bread flaky with mutton fat to go with the picnic we have brought with us. Discreetly distant is the lavatory building, which some of us have no option but to use.

Continuing over the desert, there are a few flaming natural-gas chimneys, otherwise nothing save scrub and the very occasional shock of a succulent plant with acid-yellow pompoms.

From my room in the New Bukhara Hotel I can hear goats and dogs calling in the night and see a mass of tiled domes and minarets. We have dined well on an Uzbek version of Lancashire hotpot with cumin-flavoured potatoes. Four hundred monuments await us in the morning; thank goodness we have our guide, Fatma, to sift out the best.

Just when you think you have seen the ultimate in blue tilework on the soaring arched portal of a mosque or medrese, there is another one round the corner even more breathtaking. On some the decoration is in monochrome tiles arranged in geometric patterns; others sport wild arabesques with flower motifs, or friezes three metres deep with stylised calligraphy. Their domes, resplendent in singing blues, are tufted with grass planted by passing birds. But there are also many buildings of unadorned brick, their visible mortar containing camel milk, egg yolk and bull's blood. The bricks – stamped with a design or of smooth clay – are laid course by course on differing planes, which creates a three-dimensional basketweave effect, most notable in the early tenth-century mausoleum of Ismail Samani. This building was so innovative that it became the construction template for centuries.

Another, more austere brick building is the little three-domed Chashma Ayub Mosque, which commemorates the spot where Job the prophet plunged his staff into the sand, unleashing a drought-relieving spring. The water gushes to this day from four taps within the mosque's white interior. Not really knowing why, we sprinkle a few drops over ourselves and turn off the taps, as urged by a graphic poster.

Any visitor dizzy with sightseeing will gravitate towards Bukhara's most congenial *chaikhana*, or teahouse, the Lyab-i-Hauz, which is set on the stone-paved edge of a 1620 city reservoir, its terrace sheltered by gnarled mulberry trees dating from 1477. Customers loll against bolsters all day long on the double-bed-cum-tables, drinking green tea or eating *shashlik* and salads – it takes all one's resolve to leave.

We beg for an audience with the Imam of Bukhara and are ushered into a reception room of the Friday Mosque. Possibly the most good-looking man in the world appears; his pristine turban of white lawn winds forty times round a skullcap embroidered with silver thread, and his coat is of quilted black velvet. Between fielding calls on a mobile he addresses us soberly about Islam. His pièce de résistance is a demonstration of how by repeated prayer he can intensify his heartbeat to a sledgehammer force. A man in our party is invited to feel what he reports are astonishing thumps against the imam's chest wall.

Outside, near the forty-eight-metre twelfth-century Kalon Minaret, before which even Ghengis Khan felt constrained to bow when he first saw it, and from which many a hapless prisoner was tossed in a sack to his death, a coven of cheeky little girls is waiting to pounce. In excellent English, they urge us into the nearby shop of their father/brother/mother/sister. It must be said that Bukhara has shops in almost too great abundance. Every cell of every medrese, every niche and every passageway is a boutique, and it disconcerts even the most ardent sightseer to spy out of the corner of an eye some divine striped silk coat in lime and magenta, a *susani* embroidery or length of ikat. We do not always resist.

Nor do we resist hard white honey carved from a cliff of the stuff, dried apricots glistening with syrup, or rounds of brittle nutty nougat which I am convinced is the original manna from heaven, in the biggest and best food bazaar I have ever come across. It is a shopper's paradise.

Beneath the colossal buttressed wall of the Arc Fortress, where once the Emirs and a retinue of 3,000 used to live, we can see the viewing platform high above its arched gateway from which in 1842 mad Emir Nasrullah watched as Conolly and Stoddart, two British diplomatic spies who had bungled their missions, dug their own graves before being beheaded. We are aiming for the 1712 Bolo Hauz Mosque, with its gracefully carved wooden pillars, whose "stalactite" capitals support a porch a full twelve metres up its painted façade. It has turned chilly, and men are arriving for prayer muffled in fur hats, mink, astrakhan lamb and quilted velvet coats of many hues. Gaily printed prayer mattresses are being taken inside for greater comfort.

As a contrast to the multitude of religious buildings at which one has been craning, there is no better treat than to go a short way out of town to visit the Sitori Makhi Khosa, a summer palace built for the last Emir in 1911. Part Russian iced wedding-cake, part Islamic, with painted verandas and pillars, it is a glorious failure of over-decoration in its attempt to straddle two worlds. Inside, the wall treatments are suffocatingly heavy-handed, with mirror, trellis, plasterwork, stained glass, gilding, an early Russian fridge and the Emir's bed. There are good displays of costumes and some Chinese porcelain of doubtful provenance. Tsar Nicholas II was on his way to stay when the revolution intervened. Outside in the park quince bushes are blossoming white with a delicate pink stripe and heavenly scent.

The CIA appear to have invaded our hotel. They slouch jelly-bellied in the coffee shop, playing with their laptops and loudly discussing security matters. We amuse ourselves by grimacing as we pass behind their table while covertly being photographed by our ten-year-old counter-spy.

En route to Samarkand, and having crossed another featureless desert, we cajole our bus driver into stopping at a roadside *chaikhana*. Despite the inappropriate hour, a banquet ensues. The precisely heaped *shashlik* kebabs demand to be sampled. Inset in a white-tiled counter are vats of bubbling stews. A turkey is waiting to be carved. The shaven-headed chef balletically concocts

Samarkand's 15th-century quadrant (far left, top and bottom) was built by Ulugh Beg to measure the stellar year and is still accurate to within 60 seconds. Livelier sights around the country include (right, from top) bubbling stew at a road stop; fig trees bent for easy picking; a woman chopping at lightning speed in a Tashkent market; Bukhara's Lyab-i Hauz teahouse, where divans are shaded by mulberry trees planted in 1477 *laghman* in a wok over roaring flames. From a dozen bowls he adds a bit of this, a bit of that, tossing and tasting as he goes. The finished dish of meat and vegetables plus unknown flavourings is ladled over steaming noodles. We share one bowl, careful to avoid chunks of sheep's-tail fat, against which I have been warned by the editors of this magazine.

Soon we are entering Tamerlane country. Born in 1336, Tamerlane is Uzbekistan's most notable son. From inauspicious beginnings as a cattle thief, he rose, through horsemanship, cunning, brutality and a judicious marriage to a royal Mongol widow, to conquer a realm that encompassed much of Russia, India, Persia and Turkey. He was illiterate, yet was a scholar and linguist who, absorbing the cultures and crafts of the lands he conquered, brought back to Central Asia all the delights and decorative brilliance we find so miraculous today.

Our first stop is Shahrisabz, or Kesh, where Tamerlane was born and wished to be (but was not) buried. He stands in stern Soviet sculpture before a mighty two-tower entrance portal. This is all that remains of his White Palace, which, having escaped over-restoration, evokes a very distant past. We stagger up sixty-five metres of steps to see from the roof a skyline bubbling with blue domes and distant snow-capped mountains. The tiled calligraphy on one tower reads "The Sultan is the shadow of Allah" but, because of a miscalculation, on the other there was only space for "The Sultan is the shadow". Tamerlane was unforgiving.

The crypt of his intended tomb was found in 1943 by boys who tumbled into it while kicking a football about. An improvised boutique has been laid out at the top of the steps leading down to its perfect tiny brick vault, almost filled by an empty carved stone sarcophagus.

At lunch the temperature plummets and the rest of the journey is in swirling white mist across a haunting, treeless landscape of softly rumpled pastures, the grass as close-cropped as a lawn. Vast flocks of sheep and cattle keep it that way, and lonely donkeys stand motionless by the road.

Samarkand's Afrosiyob Hotel is grim, but the hot water works, and so does the vodka. By morning it is snowing; even CNN notes that the temperature fell yesterday from plus 30 to zero degrees in a couple of hours.

БЕРЕГИТЕ ВОДУ!

Above: a poster at Chashma Ayub (Job's Fountain) urges pilgrims to conserve water. Opposite: the Chashma Ayub Mosque (bottom) marks the spot where the prophet found water. A 12th-century conical cupola crowns the shrine. Top left: this dome is a 14th-century addition. Top right: Bukhara's mausoleum of Ismail Samani (892–907), a perfect cube with basketweave brick. Centre right: a village mosque has divans for the faithful to rest

We step out into Registan Square, Samarkand's masterpiece, considered the pearl of the Orient. No words or photograph can capture the noble scale or elegance of the three arched religious buildings, with their tiled domes and minarets. Shocking as it is to find a boutique in every cell within, we feel compelled to rummage in all of them.

Tamerlane's eventual mausoleum, the Gur Emir, was built by a grandson who died before it was completed. As a dying man, Tamerlane gave orders for it to be rebuilt on a massive scale, decreeing the death penalty if it was not done within ten days. His tombstone is an unadorned slab of solid jade, the largest in the world, the green so deep it is almost black. His grave is in the crypt below, and above is the best of domes, covered with sixty-four tiled flutes in a turquoise, yellow and green lozenge design.

Our next stop is the Quadrant, constructed by Tamerlane's grandson, Ulugh Beg, the astronomer-king. A narrow stone arc diving ten metres into the ground, its whole length is calibrated with degrees and minutes. In 1429 Ulugh Beg used it to estimate the stellar year to within sixty seconds of today's calculations. Once, the arc continued above ground to complete a half circle and was encased in a three-storey drum-shaped building that was itself an astronomical instrument. But Ulugh Beg's passion for mathematics made him neglect his kingdom, and he was murdered by his own son in 1449.

The jolliest place to recover from Samarkand sightseeing is the Nasim Bobo *chaikhana,* facing the bazaar, a restaurant with a terrace ideal for watching the colourful hordes on their way to and from shopping. Waiters tempt with trays of cheeses and salads from which you take your pick to eat with hot bread before a juicy *shashlik*.

A short walk from here is, to my mind, Uzbekistan's most wondrous and sacred place. Three pilgrimages to the Shah-i Zinda equal one to Mecca, but, even without Islamic faith, visitors are incredulous at the variety, refinement and exuberance of the tiles, brick, plaster and paintwork decorating this necropolis of twenty or so jewel-like mosques and mausoleums that line a paved pathway. Count the steps up to the entrance portal and if on your way down their number differs, you, the sinner, must climb them forty more times on your knees. Tamerlane's wives, sisters, niece and wet-nurse are all buried here. But it is the fourteenth-century four-tier majolica tomb deep inside the Kussan-ibn-Abbas Mosque that blazes brightest in cobalt and gold.

Just outside Samarkand we chance upon an immense orchard of fig trees, leafless in the early spring, their ancient crippled trunks supported and trained to lean at an acute angle over the ground rather than to grow upwards, presumably for ease of picking without a ladder. The plantation has been here for centuries, and we convince ourselves that Tamerlane himself relished its fruit. A fanciful notion on which to end our journey. ◆

Min Hogg is the founding editor of *The World of Interiors*. She travelled with Distant Horizons, tel +44(0)161 225 5317 (info@distanthorizons.co.uk). This year the World Monuments Fund (WMF) is organising a tour to Uzbekistan in association with Audley Travel, from September 28 to October 8, 2005. Audley Travel: tel +44(0)20 7730 5344 (www.audleytravel.com). Turkish Airlines offers regular Central Asian connections via Istanbul: www.thy.com

Book offer: Justin Marozzi's new biography, *Tamerlane: Sword of Islam, Conqueror of the World* (HarperCollins £25), is offered post-free to Cornucopia subscribers at £23.50 (see www.cornucopia.net)

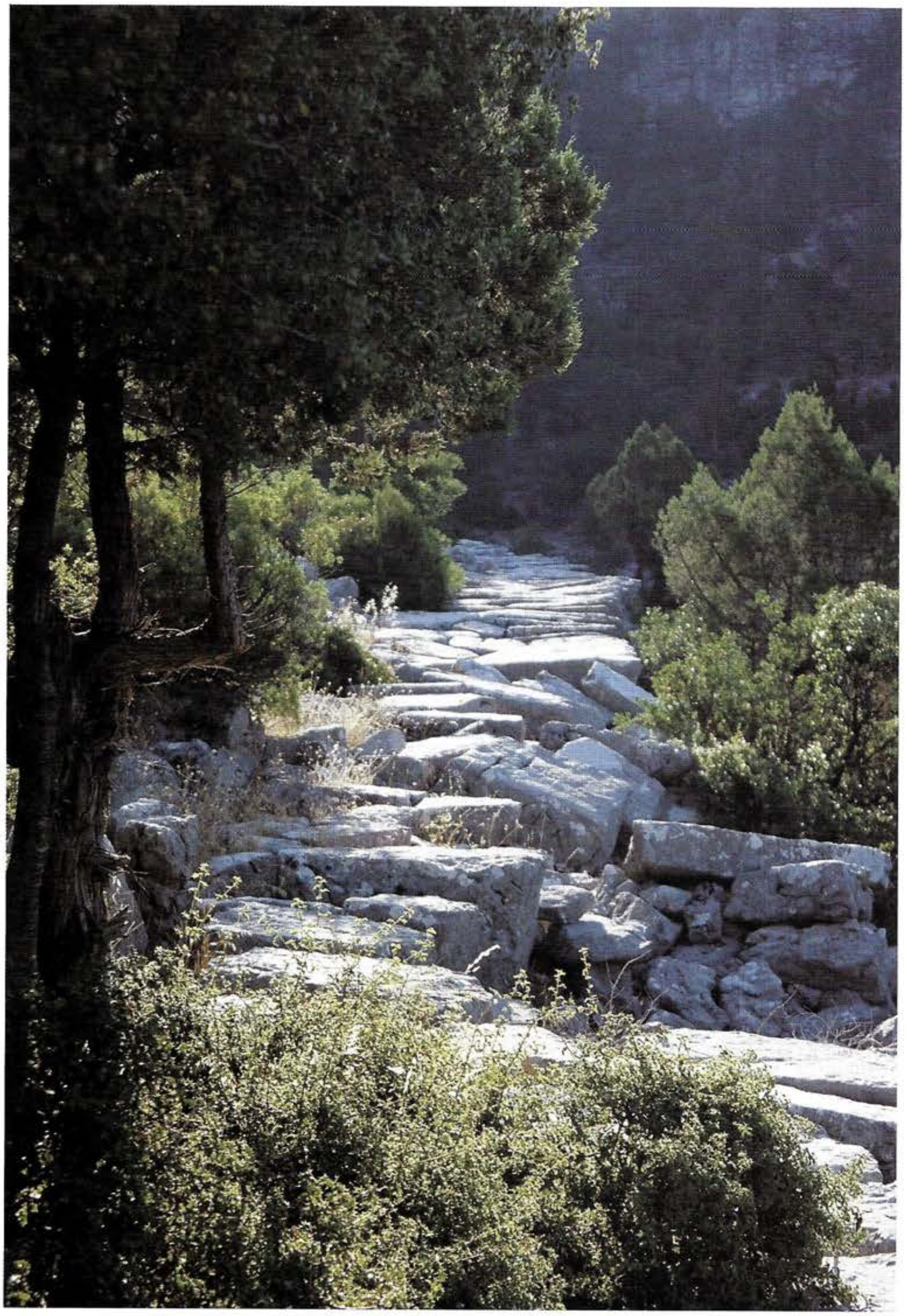
WALKING THE TAURUS

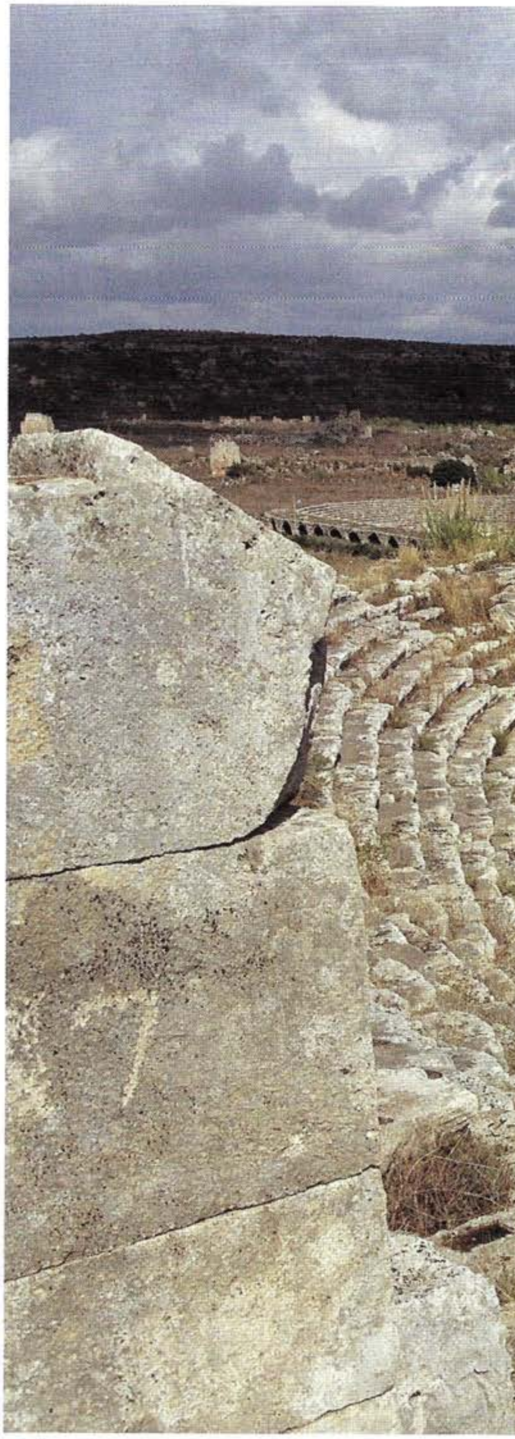
Kate Clow, creator of Turkey's first official walking route, has done it again. Caroline Finkel joined her on the new St Paul Trail that crosses the giant Taurus range in southern Turkey. Photographs by Kate Clow and Terry Richardson

Going north from Perge, the walkers' route rises to the wheat fields of Haşkızılören, known as Ören. The village is linked to schools, shops and civilisation by a long and often muddy dirt road

THE 2,799M SUMMIT OF BARLA IN DECEMBER, WITH THE NORTHERN SHORES OF LAKE EĞIRDIR JUST VISIBLE THROUGH THE CLOUDS. FOOTPRINTS SEEN IN THE SNOW MAY HAVE BELONGED TO A BEAR. THE FAR SIDE OF THE PEAK IS KNOWN AS AYI YALAĞI – THE BEAR TROUGH

Sunset over Lake Eğirdir, noted for its different hues as it reflects the surrounding mountains, including Davras and Barla. The Roman city of Antioch in Pisidia stood just north of the lake, near the town of Yalvaç. Fishing boats provide transport over this 40km stretch of water





It would take "several weeks and a Primus stove to review properly *The Lycian Way*," wrote Cornucopia of Kate Clow's first guide to the joys of long-distance walking in Turkey. The truth, however, is that when doing it Clow's Way three twigs and a match is more than enough, and you leave the stove at home. The St Paul Trail is the second long-distance route created by Kate Clow (with Terry Richardson), and when I walked it with the author in August 2004 it was not only our clothes that were skimpy; we took no tent and no raingear. But we did carry eggs for breakfast every morning – cooking them with spicy *sucuk* sausage means no extra oil need be carried – and Kate's irrepressible hounds, who accompanied us, did not go hungry. This was minimalist camping, and it was "very heaven".

The purpose of our walk in searing August was to check a forested section of the trail where a fire had raged. This section of the route – between the villages of Çukurca and Kozdere, southeast of Lake Eğirdir – is far from any roads, and the only reminder of the existence of transport speedier

Opposite: St Paul must have trudged up this Roman road to the acropolis of Adada, an ancient city high on the Taurus plateau. The carolling of Ruppell's warblers in the juniper scrub greets passing walkers today. Left: on a quiet path near Akbaş a chameleon has emerged from the greenery and has yet to adjust its colour to match the background. Above: the theatre at Perge was a richly decorated attraction in St Paul's day but is now unsafe and closed. Its marble friezes are in the Antalya Museum

than shanks's pony is the occasional drone of aircraft carrying northerners to their non-ambulatory holidays by the sea.

The heat proved the least of our problems. One afternoon the skies opened, lightning flashed and thunder roared. Some hours later, soaked to the skin, we reached Gölcük, a hamlet of two-roomed stone cottages with wooden roofs, high in the mountains, where we were taken in, dried out before a roaring fire, fed on the local fare of flat bread, cheese and yoghurt, and sheltered for the night. Our welcoming hosts were gatherers of thyme, a wild bounty harvested in these parts in late summer and sold for a decent profit. We were not the first to take refuge there: as Kate notes in her book, above the door is scratched into the wood *"Maşallah yuvasına"*, *"Sığınmış Hüdasına"*, *"Allah sağlık versin"* – "May God protect this nest", "May the Creator show it mercy", "May God grant health" – paeans of gratitude for rough hospitality by earlier visitors who had found themselves caught in a storm. Monsoon-like rain apart,

water was scarce; we drank from wells and cisterns along the way, each meticulously encircled by horizontal wooden planks laid out like the rays of the sun to catch run-off, and ringed around with a stockade of vertical planks to keep animals out. We cooled off by swimming in the Köprülü river and slept under the stars with only goats for company.

I had also walked part of the St Paul Trail in an inclement November 2003 – a very different experience. Then we stayed deep in the mountains in the town of Sütçüler, a name deriving from the days when it was inhabited by dairy farmers. Instead we found a school with hundreds of pupils in their late teens learning accountancy and business, far from their families and more than fifty kilometres from Eğirdir, the next sizeable town. From Sütçüler we walked for one day in the dramatic Yazılı Canyon. Another day we trod well-worn *kaldırıms* (paved paths), their stones laid down years ago with back-breaking effort. Everywhere we survived taxing climbs and were rewarded with breathtaking views. One night we were treated to a lunar eclipse in the clear, clear sky. After a night in Eğirdir we awoke to a storm, and the first snow flurries of winter accompanied us as we walked on the slopes above the lake. We visited two little-frequented classical sites, Antioch in Pisidia – to which Paul came on all three of his journeys to Anatolia – and Adada, which he visited on his first journey. Antioch is an extensive site and its past importance is still evident, despite the many earthquakes that have played havoc with its stones. A number of buildings survive there, including nineteen arches of the aqueduct that brought water to the city from ten kilometres away. The Roman road at Adada (pictured on the previous pages and on the cover of Kate Clow's book) is an extraordinarily impressive feat of engineering, built of rectangular stone blocks perhaps a metre wide and as long as two men. It snakes for some few hundred metres up the side of the acropolis hill to an ancient city as atmospheric as any in Anatolia.

Walking inland on the St Paul Trail is a very different experience from the

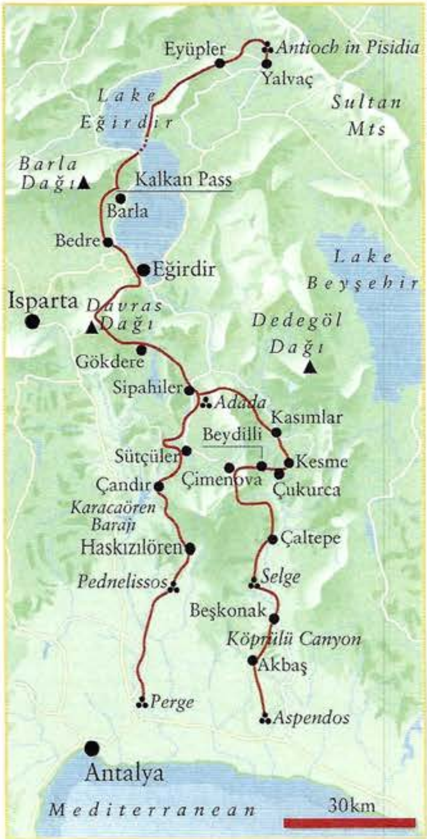
Opposite: a family ride down to Barla market from their encampment high in the summer pastures. The door from an old Greek house now graces Mehmet's hut on Barla's 1,800m Kalkan Pass, a haven in bad weather that is unlocked in winter. Barla is in an important area for rose-growing, and prunings make useful firewood. Above: six o'clock in the morning on the old road from Beydilli to Çimenova

Lycian Way, where the sea is ever-present. Turkey has some of the most varied countryside, the most rewarding scenery, the most visible evidence of the past, anywhere on earth. But official reluctance to make available maps of a scale larger than 1:250,000 remains the most effective barrier to access, enjoyment and appreciation of these riches. The true value of Kate Clow's books is that they unlock the key to these undervalued pleasures.

Many people have played a part in making the St Paul Trail a reality – from clearers of scrub and painters of the red-and-white stripes that urge one ever on, to the bureaucrats who allowed themselves to be cajoled into recognising its unique worth. Those familiar with the *Lycian Way* will find in this latest volume the same clear directions on the nitty-gritty of trail-finding, rich description of the historical and natural splendours of the trail, basic vocabulary and vital information about appropriate clothing and provisions, as well as the helpful innovation of GPS (Global Positioning System) readings taken at intervals along the route, and visual and numeric indications of altitude at points along the trail. The map is also much improved.

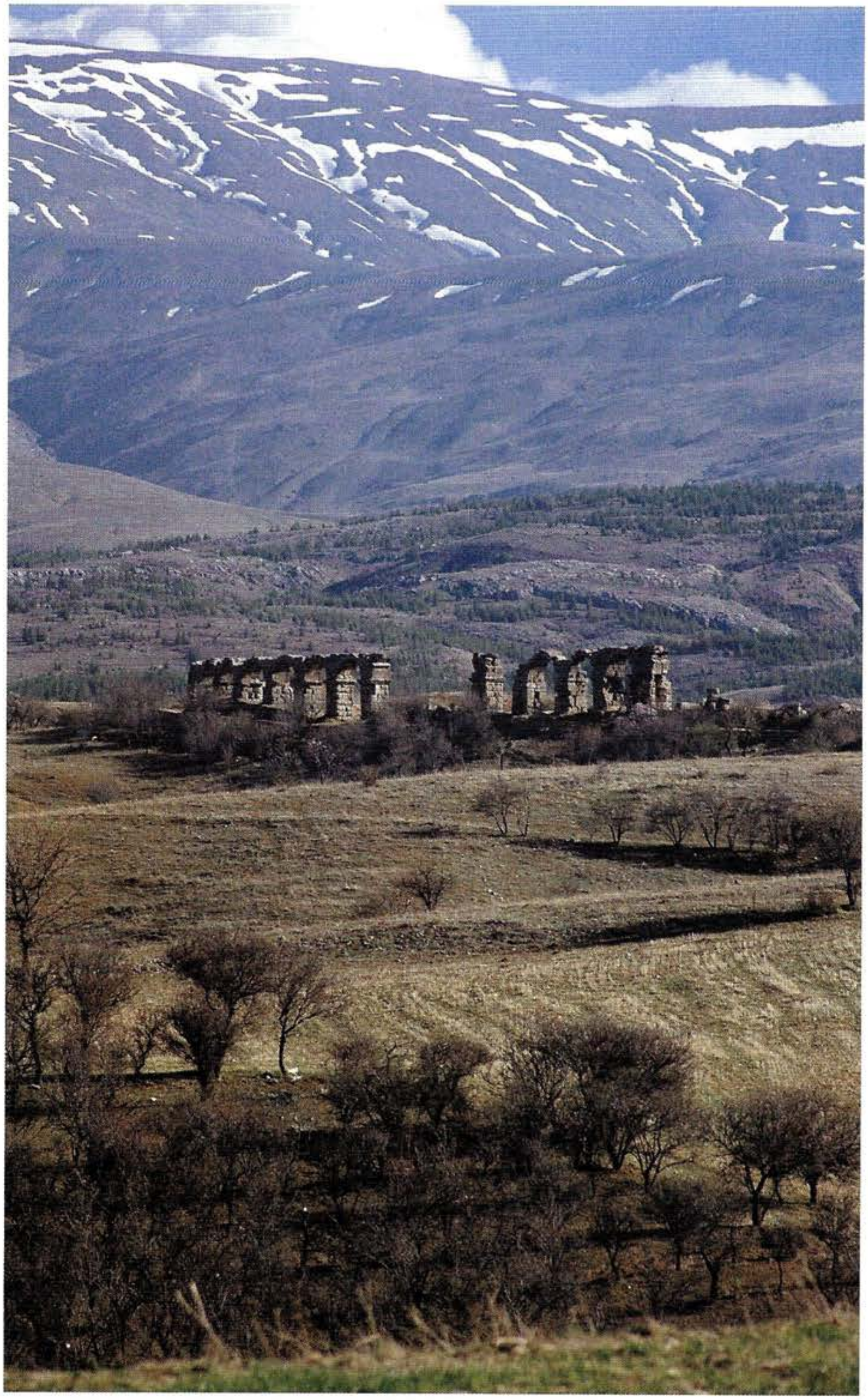
St Paul Trail allows all – armchair explorers included – to share the thrill of the unfettered life. As reluctant cooks can enjoy cookery books, so the sedentary can fantasise about what they might achieve, given just the slightest inclination to renounce their week of sloth by the sea.

Caroline Finkel is the author of a new history of the Ottoman Empire, *Osman's Dream*, published by John Murray, July 2005. For details of *St Paul Trail*, see page 99


Eyüpler
Antioch in Pisidia
Yalvaç
Sultan Mts
Lake Eğirdir
Barla Dağı
Kalkan Pass
Barla
Bedre
Eğirdir
Lake Beyşehir
Isparta
Davras Dağı
Dedegöl Dağı
Gökdere
Sipahiler
Adada
Kasımlar
Beydilli
Sütçüler
Kesme
Çandır
Çimenova
Çukurca
Karacaören Barajı
Haskızılören
Çaltepe
Pednelissos
Selge
Beşkonak
Köprülü Canyon
Akbaş
Perge
Aspendos
Antalya
Mediterranean
30km

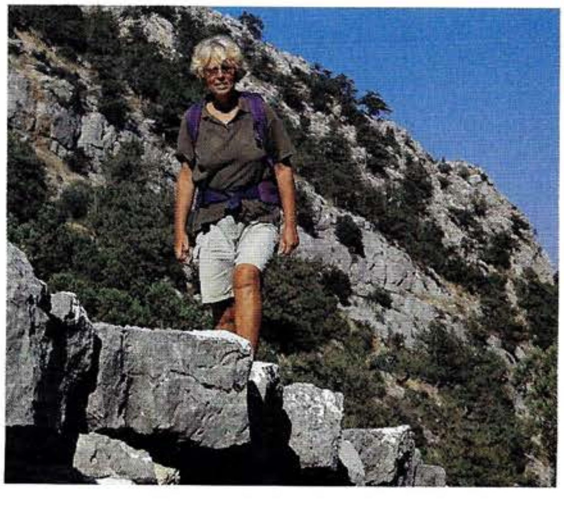
SUSANNA HICKLING

THE END OF THE TRAIL IS THE ROMAN 'COLONIA' OF ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA, WHICH ST PAUL VISITED THREE TIMES. ITS MAIN ROAD WAS COLONNADED AND RAN BENEATH ONE WING OF A THEATRE SEATING 15,000



The colony of Antioch in Pisidia was the Emperor Augustus's second capital in Anatolia, built to guard the northern flank of the Taurus Mountains. Above: the aqueduct, with 19 magnificent arches, brings water down from the snowy Sultan Mountains ten kilometres away to supply the nymphaeum and baths. Above right: part of the frieze on the Temple of Zeus, built during Augustus's reign. In front of it was a parade ground where the colony's veterans would demonstrate their allegiance to Rome.

Right: Kate Clow, author and mastermind behind the route, on the Roman road to Adada. Opposite, far right: Roman masonry is strewn around the site. This stone in the nearby village of Eyüpler commemorates a centurian from the Fifth Legion



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Travel notes

The St Paul Trail is Turkey's second long-distance walking route. Opened in 2004 and way-marked with red-and-white stripes, it runs approximately 500km from Perge to Antioch in Pisidia via Adada, and from Aspendos to Adada (see the map on page 95).

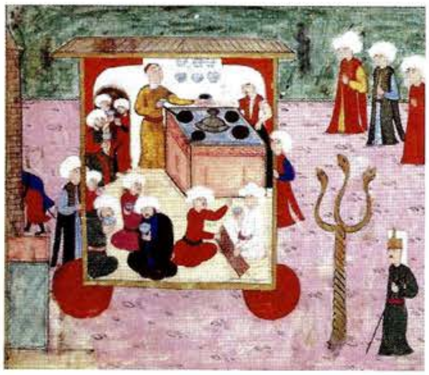
The route is supported by a book of the same name (with a map) written by Kate Clow and Terry Richardson, creators of the country's first trail, the Lycian Way.

For more information about the trail, to order the book or to contact Kate Clow, look at www.trekkinginturkey.com. Both *St Paul Trail* (£13.99) and *The Lycian Way* (£12.99) are also available post-free to CORNUCOPIA subscribers from the magazine's website, www.cornucopia.net. To join a group trekking, visit www.middleearthtravel.com or order the Exodus walking and trekking brochure from www.exodus.co.uk.

The Story of Turkish Coffee

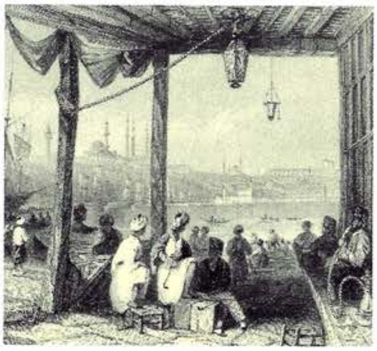
450 YEARS

When Özdemir Pasha, the Governor of Yemen, discovered the wonder of coffee 450 years ago, he brought coffee beans back with him to Istanbul.



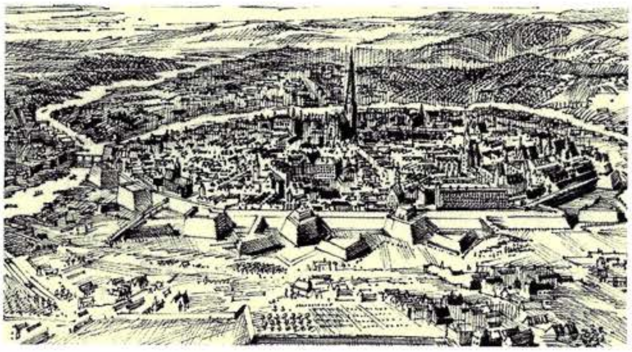
TAHMIS SOKAK

Almost at once coffee houses began to spring up in Istanbul, and the drink even gave its name to one of the city's streets, Tahmis Sokak, the Street of the Roasted Coffee Bean.



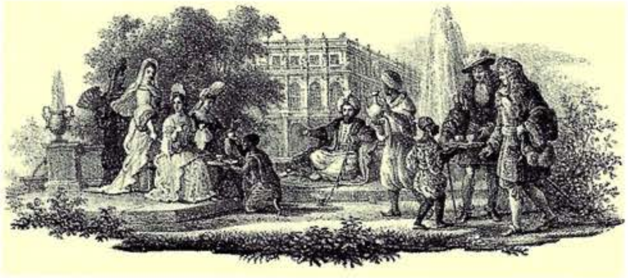
TO VENICE AND MARSEILLES

The fame of Turkish coffee soon spread to Europe – first to Venice, then to Marseilles – and from there to the rest of the world.



SÜLEYMAN AĞA

The French acquired the taste for Turkish coffee above all from the Ottoman Ambassador to Paris Süleyman Ağa, a legendary raconteur.



1871

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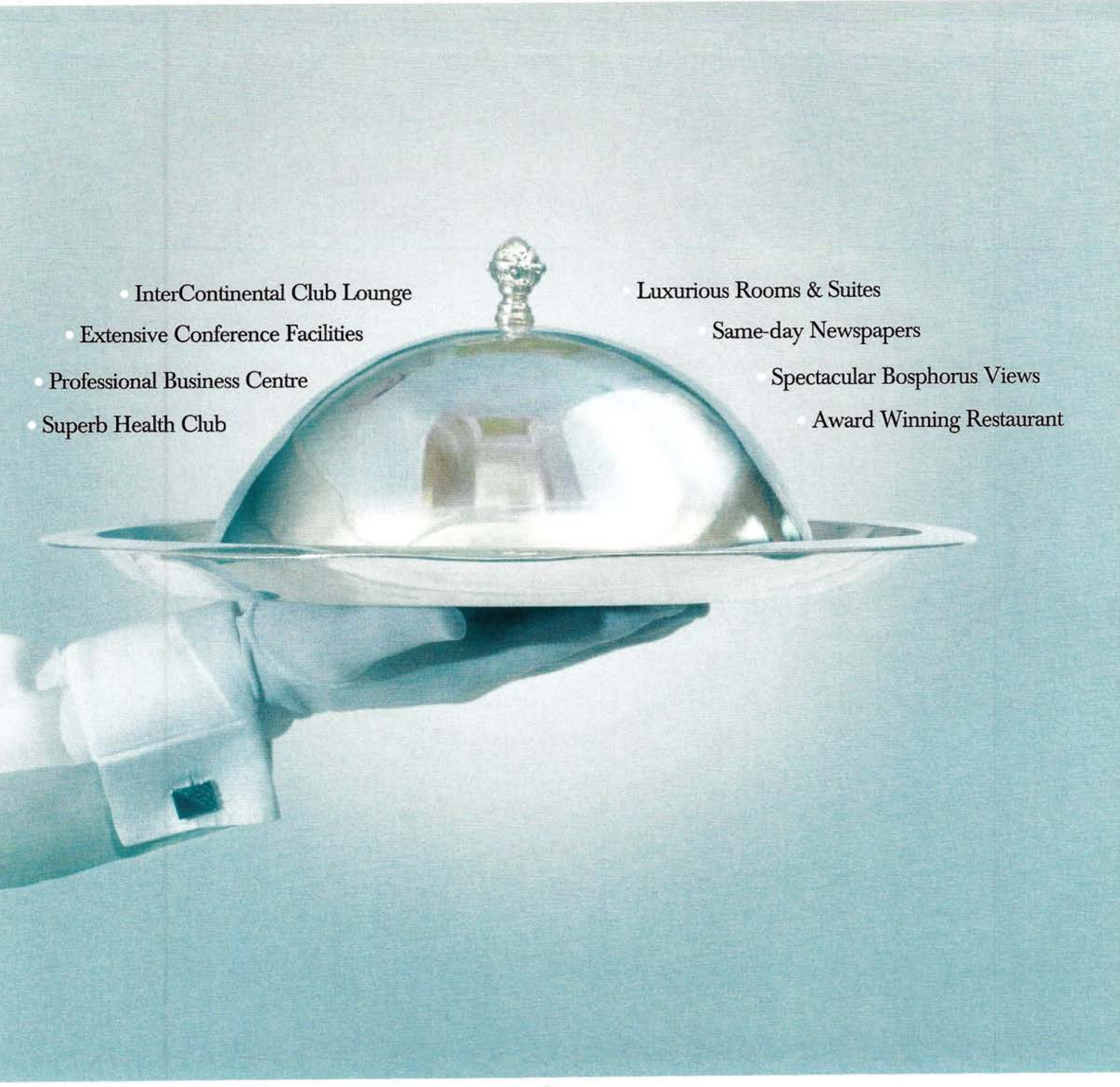
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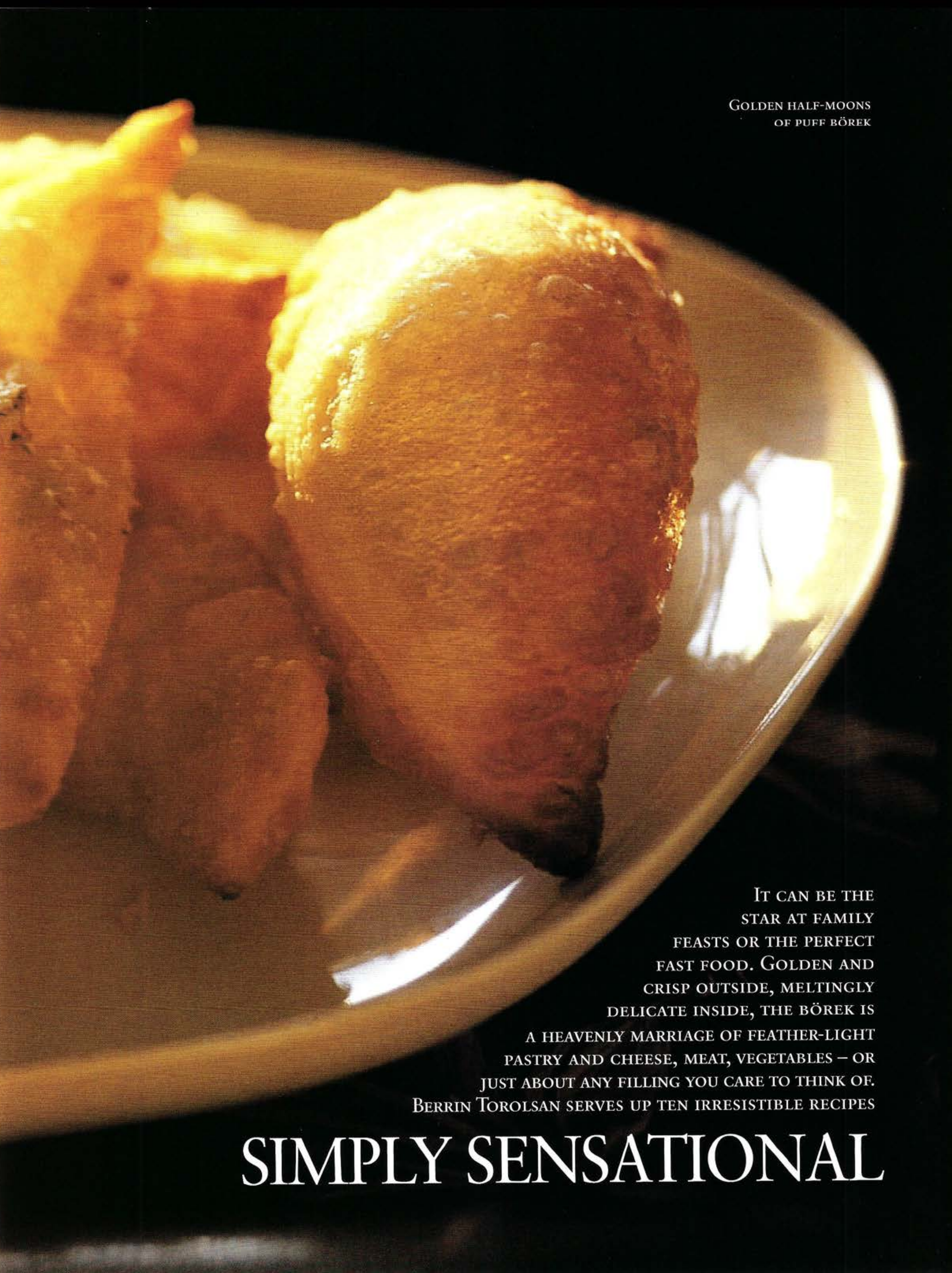
BERRIN TOROLSAN



Golden half-moons of puff börek

It can be the star at family feasts or the perfect fast food. Golden and crisp outside, meltingly delicate inside, the börek is a heavenly marriage of feather-light pastry and cheese, meat, vegetables – or just about any filling you care to think of. Berrin Torolsan serves up ten irresistible recipes

SIMPLY SENSATIONAL

My grandmother was a fine lady with a taste for the good things in life and boundless energy for creating those little pleasures that make life more enjoyable. Besides big lunches on festive days, one of those pleasures was her impromptu midweek börek lunch parties. They would often be announced at short notice, but I don't remember a single invitation being turned down. Appointments were shifted around, and my father and uncles would be sure to come home from work specially.

There was usually one savoury pastry dish on the menu, along with plenty of salad and fresh fruit. Sometimes it would be *Tabak Börek*, sometimes *Tatar Börek*. But it was *Puf Börek* that reigned supreme (see recipes). We would gather round a mountain of these puffed-up böreks displayed in the centre of her large dining table. Sometimes the pile was so high that I couldn't see the person sitting opposite me. Amid the jolly chatter, there were occasional sighs of "I've lost count" as someone reached for yet another golden puff. And as soon as one mountain vanished, another pile appeared from the kitchen, freshly fried, to take its place. "Mother, who is going to eat all this?" my mother and aunt would exclaim. But my grandmother would take not the slightest notice and, more often than not, at the end of the meal not a single börek remained. On the rare occasions when any were left over, they would be wrapped and given to a guest to take away as a welcome snack for later.

What exactly is a börek? Put simply, it is a savoury pie: a filling, usually of cheese or meat, is sandwiched between sheets of thinly rolled-out dough. It is baked, or pan-fried or deep-fried, which allows the ingredients to combine in a delectable marriage as the filling melts, blending to a creamy consistency inside a crisp casing of pastry.

Although böreks come in an almost infinite variety of shapes and sizes, the common denominator and chief inspiration is the fine sheet of pastry known as *yufka*. A *yufka* (or *yupka*, as it is spelt in Mahmut al Kashgari's eleventh-century lexicon of Turkic languages, *Divanü Lûgat-it-Türk*) is a thin sheet of dry-cooked unleavened dough. *Yufka* was an ingeniously practical invention. These dry, feather-light leaves of bread could not have been more appropriate for people with a nomadic way of life.

The French nobleman Bertrandon de la Brocquière, "first esquire carver to Philippe le Bon", who travelled across "Turcomania" on his way from Palestine to France in 1433, came across Turkmen nomads near Adana, in southern Anatolia. With their customary hospitality, they offered the passers-by cheese and grapes and "a dozen of thin cakes of bread, thinner than wafers: they fold them up as grocers do their papers for spices, and eat them filled with the curdled milk, called by them Yogort". A few days later he "lodged" at another Turkmen encampment of round felt "pavilions". "It was here I saw women make those thin cakes I spoke of. They have a small round table, very smooth, on which they throw some flour, and mix it with water to a paste, softer than that for bread. This paste they divide into round pieces, which they flatten as much as possible with a wooden roller *[oklava]* of a smaller diameter than an egg, until they make them as thin as I have mentioned. During this operation, they have a convex plate of iron *[sac]* placed on a tripod *[sacayak]*, and heat it by a gentle fire underneath, on which they spread the cake, and instantly turn it, so that they make two of their cakes sooner than a waferman can make one wafer."

Yufka is still a rural staple today, and a coarse homemade *yufka* is as widely consumed as bread in most Anatolian villages. *Yufka* rolled around a spread of grape molasses is a popular shepherd's snack. The village woman's quick meal of *katlama* (literally "folded") – crumbled cheese and butter wrapped in *yufka* and toasted on a hot griddle – is still hugely enjoyed in the countryside.

Finer leaves of *yufka* are sold to make börek in markets, bakers and *yufkacı* shops all over the country. Rolled out into large circular, gauze-like sheets, 60cm (2ft) in diameter, they will have been lightly dry-cooked on both sides on a hot iron griddle, exactly as Bertrandon described six centuries ago. The ingredients, even the utensils, are the same. Only the fuel has changed, as camp fires have given way to electricity.

Simple snacks evolved over time into more complicated tray-baked böreks, employing ever more varied ingredients and cooking facilities, and, above all, calling for a large, well-organised community to gather round the börek tray and enjoy a shared meal.

Plain *yufka* dough made with wheat flour and water came to be enriched with eggs to create a softer pasta dough. Flaky pastry came from working in butter, fat or oil, leading in turn to *strudel* and puff pastry. All could all be used to envelop a delectable filling and be baked or fried as neat parcels of every shape and size.

The börek has an extensive place in Turkey's culinary repertoire, and the choice of fillings is infinite. Something that is protein-rich to complement the carbohydrate of the pastry makes for a perfect nutritional balance. From cheese to spicy ground meat or sautéed meat cubes with nuts and raisins; from chicken or turkey to fish and lentils; from offal such as brain or tripe to vegetables – the list is almost endless. Spinach, leek, potato, aubergine, courgette, pumpkin, cabbage and spring greens, sorrel and nettle can all be included. And fillings are often further enhanced with butter, yoghurt, milk, eggs and fresh herbs.

As to the cooking, theoretically one needs an oven, whether modern or rustic, in which to bake böreks. But delicious tray böreks are still cooked, as they would have been in earlier times, on an open fire and covered with an iron lid, with the embers piled on top to create an oven-like effect. Or else they can be simply cooked very fast on an open flame, then flipped over like a pancake and cooked on the other side.

Perhaps the forerunner of all pastries, *yufka* must have opened up a whole new culinary horizon, leading the way to a constellation of böreks, and a further galaxy of baklavas – for that is what you have when the pastry is given a nut-based filling, sweetened with honey or sugar syrup. Baklava calls for *yufka* rolled out into paper-thin leaves so fine that you can almost see through them: it may have anything from forty to eighty leaves, with a nut filling in between, yet be no thicker than two fingers. Another sweet idea is to take little morsels of fried börek and saturate them in syrup or honey; the result is crisp sweetmeats oozing with sweetness. But these call for a well-equipped kitchen, more time, and helping hands to tend to the frying while others are being served.

As the börek evolved, increasingly intricate dishes were devised in palaces and wealthier households, and above all by Ottoman sufi dervishes, for whom cuisine played a symbolic role on the path to perfection. By the fifteenth century the börek was already a classic dish. We know that Mehmet II, one Saturday in 1474, was served a börek that had been baked in the imperial bread ovens and was therefore called *furun böreği*, or "oven börek", which suggests that other techniques were also practised.

By the seventeenth century, according to the chronicler Evliya Çelebi, there were a staggering 4,000 specialist börek shops in Istanbul. These were strictly not to be confused with bread and biscuit shops. Even the mills producing the quality white wheat flour for the börek shops were different from those supplying the bakers.

Börek shops nowadays are less specialised. Tray böreks are sold in baklava shops by the portion or the kilo; others made from flaky pastry are sold individually in patisseries, along with croissants and millefeuilles. A 1780 decree governing Istanbul's börek sellers stipulates that böreks should contain no less than 250 *dirhem* (802g) of mutton which must be "unadulterated with other meats". (Offenders would be severely fined.) Some things have changed little. Judging by the quantity of filling, böreks must have been baked in large trays and sold cut into rectangles, as they are to this day, for a börek with a savoury filling, then as now, makes the perfect quick meal.

I still miss my grandmother's böreks, the delicious smells wafting from the kitchen, and the gasps of delight as a mound of hot, golden pastry puffs appeared at the table. And above all I miss the conviviality of those carefree börek parties.

A NOTE ON YUFKA:
A variety of buttered paper-thin pastry – known by its Hellenic name, filo or *phyllo* – is well established in Western cuisines. Filo is manufactured around the globe, and böreks made from it are very popular outside Turkey, especially on London restaurant menus.

The first five böreks described here are made with ready-made *yufka* dough, which is less brittle than filo and lighter when fried or baked. If you cannot find ready-made *yufka*, use filo pastry, or better still make your own with flour, water and a pinch of salt.

SIGARA BÖREĞI
CIGARETTE BÖREK

1 leaf of yufka dough

Filling:
1 egg
100g white or feta cheese (crumbled)
One cup fresh parsley (finely chopped)
Oil for frying

This, the easiest and most rewarding börek, keeps in the fridge or freezer but can also be prepared in no time and served as a snack, starter or main course. Classic fillings are the cheese one described here, or minced meat (as in *Muska Böreği*, right). But depending on how imaginative you wish to be, countless variations can be tried, using different ingredients.

1 Spread the circular *yufka* on a flat surface. Halve and quarter it with a knife, and place the quarters on top of each other. Halve and quarter these, to obtain 16 identical wedges from one leaf (depending on your needs, you can increase the quantity). Pile the wedges on top of each other.

2 To make the filling: break the egg into a bowl. Reserve a little egg white for later to seal the böreks. Beat the rest and mix in the cheese and parsley.

3 Spoon a little filling onto the broad end of each wedge, fold the sides over the filling and roll up the börek on a board like a cigar, using a touch of egg white on the pointed end to seal it.

4 Heat plenty of oil in a deep pan and deep-fry the böreks. They are best served hot, when they are at the peak of their crunchiness, with a creamy heart.

MUSKA BÖREĞI
AMULET TRIANGLE BÖREK

2 leaves of yufka dough

Filling:
Knob of butter
1 onion (grated)
150g minced meat (veal or mutton)
Freshly ground black pepper
Parsley and dill (finely chopped)
Oil for frying

Quick to prepare, this börek is another winner. Choose from a broad range of fillings, from spicy cheeses to vegetables, from shrimps to mushrooms (for the classic white cheese filling, see *Sigara Böreği*, left). This recipe uses the traditional minced-meat filling.

1 Spread the *yufkas* on a work surface. Cut into even-sized strips, about three fingers (5cm) wide and 20cm long.

2 Prepare the filling by heating the butter in a skillet and sautéing the onion until translucent. Stir in the meat, season with pepper and sparingly with salt (because *yufka* is already salted) and stir-fry until all the juices are absorbed. Remove from the heat, add the chopped herbs, stir and set aside to cool slightly.

3 Spoon a little meat filling near one end and fold the nearest corner over the filling to make a triangle. Continue folding, securing the open sides in a neat triangular parcel. Finish by dampening the loose end with a little water to seal.

4 Heat the oil and deep-fry the böreks until deliciously puffed up. Serve at once as an appetiser, or with a robust green salad and a glass of red wine as a complete meal.

AN OKLAVA, THE EXTRA-LONG ROLLING PIN USED TO MAKE LARGE FINE LEAVES OF YUFKA

POTATO BÖREK, ROLLED UP INTO A CYLINDER AND CUT INTO SLICES LIKE A SWISS ROLL, READY TO BE BAKED CRISP AND GOLDEN

Patatesli Börek
Potato Börek

2 leaves of yufka dough

Filling:

4 potatoes

2 eggs

1/2 cup olive oil

250g white or feta cheese (crumbled)

Fresh parsley (chopped)

Freshly ground black pepper

1 tablespoon nigella seeds (çörek otu)

For this dainty börek, it saves time to use shop-bought *yufka*. Alternatively you can roll out your own dough with flour and water. Prepared in advance, the börek keeps in the fridge and even improves with time.

1 Boil the potatoes in salted water, remove the skins and mash them. Beat the eggs and, reserving a little for later to brush the top of the börek, add to the mashed potatoes, along with the olive oil, cheese and parsley. Mash well with a fork to blend the ingredients, and season generously with pepper.

2 Lay a piece of greaseproof paper on a flat surface and spread the first leaf of *yufka* over it. Spoon half the potato filling on to it, spreading evenly with the back of the spoon and taking care not to tear the *yufka*. Place the second *yufka* on top and cover it with the rest of the filling. Trim the sides in straight lines and place the trimmings over the top of the filling of the second *yufka*. Roll into a neat cylinder, using the greaseproof paper to hold it together. Seal the seam with a touch of beaten egg. Wrap the cylinder in the same paper and chill in the fridge for one hour or longer.

3 Before baking, use a sharp breadknife to cut the cylinder into thick slices two fingers thick. Arrange the slices so they are flat, cut-side up, in a buttered baking tin. Brush the top with the reserved beaten egg, sprinkle with nigella seeds and bake in a medium oven for about half an hour. Like many dishes with olive oil, this one improves overnight and, whether served cold or heated up, the leftovers taste as good as freshly baked.

Kol Böreği
Börek with Spinach

2 leaves of yufka dough

100g butter (melted)

1 egg

1 cup milk

1 tablespoon sesame seeds (optional)

Filling:

1/2kg fresh spinach

250g white or feta cheese (crumbled)

1 egg

Freshly ground black pepper

Spinach is a good winter filling, but there are many alternatives, from pumpkin to lentils. The appearance is delightful: a cloud-like whirlpool of light, succulent pastry.

1 Start by preparing the filling. Rinse and drain the spinach. Chop it finely on a board. Mix together with the cheese and egg, season with pepper and set aside.

2 Spread the two leaves of *yufka* dough on a flat surface. Cut each leaf in half to obtain four semicircles.

3 Spread the melted butter over one of

the semicircles. Spread a quarter of the spinach filling evenly along the straight, cut edge, and starting from this edge roll it into a cylindrical tube. Transfer, seam side down, to a buttered circular baking dish. Wind it into a coil and place it in the centre of the dish, tucking the ends underneath to seal. Repeat with the remaining three *yufkas* and wind each tube snugly around the centre to fill the bottom of the dish.

4 Beat the second egg, mix with the milk and pour over the börek. Sprinkle with the sesame seeds, if you are using them. Cover and store in the fridge until needed.

5 Bake in a moderate oven for about 30 minutes until the top is golden. Serve hot, as a main course, with a generous helping of creamy natural yoghurt.

Saç Böreği
Upside-Down Börek

1 leaf yufka dough

Butter

Filling:

1 cup any cheese (crumbled or grated)

Parsley, dill or both (finely chopped)

1 egg

1/2 cup natural yoghurt

A *saç* (pronounced "satch") is the slightly domed, shield-like iron griddle used by Turkic tribes since time immemorial to cook *yufka* bread. This börek is very thin, so it can be cooked like a pancake in seconds on the *saç* without having to resort to an oven. When one side is browned, they turn it upside down to cook the top – hence its alternative name: *alt-üst* (upside-down) börek. In this version it is cooked in a pan with a lid.

1 Take a non-stick shallow pan or frying pan with a lid. Spread the *yufka* on the table and, using the lid as a template, cut a circle from one corner with the point of a knife and set aside.

2 Butter the pan and line the base with the rest of the *yufka* leaf, pressing it gently into the base. With a pair of kitchen scissors, trim off any excess, leaving a slight overhang around the edges to be folded over later.

3 Prepare the filling by mixing the cheese, herbs, lightly beaten egg and yoghurt together to a creamy texture. Tear the remaining *yufka* trimmings into small pieces and fold them into the filling.

4 Transfer the filling to the pan. Flatten the top with the back of the spoon. Lay the small *yufka* circle over the top and press gently with your hand to flatten it further. Brush the top lightly with a little melted butter. Finally, fold the hanging edges of the *yufka* base over the top to secure the filling.

5 Cover the pan and cook on a gentle heat for about 10 minutes, checking from time to time. When the bottom is browned, remove the pan from the heat and, holding the lid on firmly, turn it upside down to transfer the börek into the lid. Add a little extra butter to the pan and slide the börek from the lid into the pan to cook the other side.

6 When the other side is also done, slide the börek from the pan onto a platter and serve warm, cut into wedges.

Puf Böreği
Puff Börek

About 4 cups wheat flour

1 cup water

Salt

1 egg

1/2 cup olive oil

Filling:

1 egg

Parsley and dill (finely chopped)

250g white or feta cheese

Oil for frying

This puffed-up börek – photographed on the opening pages – is the superstar in the constellation of böreks. Its delicate, flaky, melting-in-the-mouth texture makes it addictive. The use of a traditional *oklava* makes it easy to roll out the pastry into a large, fine sheet.

1 Knead the flour, water, salt, one of the eggs and the olive oil into a pliable dough. Cover and leave to rest for about an hour.

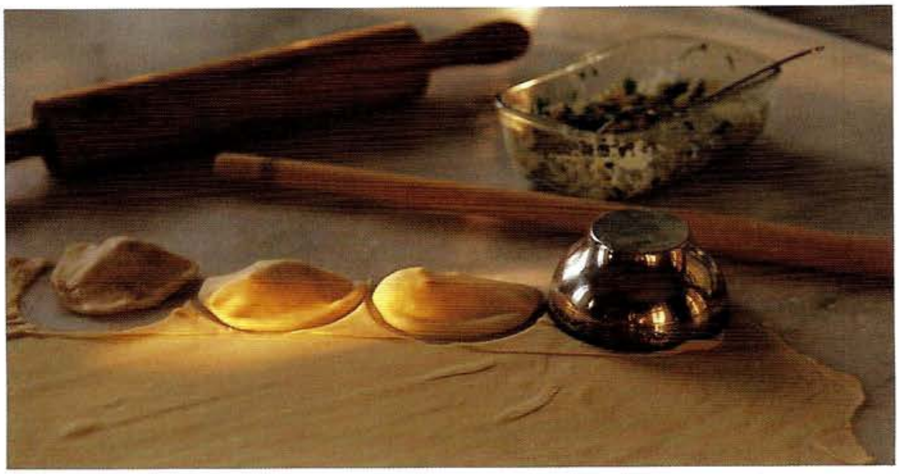
2 Divide the dough into six identical pieces. Roll each piece into a circle about 20cm in diameter. Brush with olive oil and place them one on top of each other.

3 When finished, fold up this stack of circles, knead briefly once more and roll into a ball. Divide into two equal pieces and cover with a damp cloth.

4 Prepare the filling by breaking the second egg into a bowl. Beat it with a fork and add the parsley, dill and cheese. Blend well to a creamy consistency.

5 On a spacious surface lightly dusted with extra flour, or better still rice flour, roll out one of the balls as finely as possible with a rolling pin or *oklava* into a sheet about 60cm (almost 2ft) in diameter. Down one side of this sheet of dough, about four finger-widths in from the edge, place small mounds of filling in a row, spacing them evenly about four finger-widths apart. Leave enough space at the edge to fold the dough over the filling (see picture below). Flip the outer edge over the filling and, press the rim of a glass or small metal lid into the dough to cut small semicircles around the mounds of filling. This seals the filling inside. Transferring cut börek pieces to a clean kitchen towel, repeat, row by row, with the rest of the dough and again with the second ball of dough. Knead the trimmings into another ball and repeat with the remaining filling.

6 Heat plenty of oil in a deep pan and deep-fry the böreks on both sides. Serve hot and puffed up, perhaps accompanied by a refreshing compôte freshly made with seasonal fruit.



Use the sharp edge of a metal cup to cut and seal half-moon puff böreks

◇

KIYMALI BÖREK
SAVOURY MINCE ROLLS

About 2 cups wheat flour
Salt
1/2 cup tepid water
1 tablespoon natural yoghurt
1 tablespoon wine vinegar
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 egg
Filling:
Knob of butter
300g minced meat (veal or mutton)
3 onions (grated)
Water
Salt
2 teaspoons granulated sugar
Freshly ground black pepper
Parsley and dill (finely chopped)
Nigella seeds to decorate

This is my aunt's börek. For me it is unrivalled and I have to confess I have never managed to make any as delicious as hers. But here is the recipe – the challenge is yours. These strudel-dough-based böreks are so delectable that you could serve them as a light breakfast, with tea, or as a filling meal, with salad and yoghurt. They are delicious oven-fresh or reheated, and are wonderful cold for picnics and when travelling.

1 Knead the flour, salt, water, yoghurt, vinegar, olive oil and the yolk of the egg (reserving the white for later) into a soft dough. Shape it first into a ball, then cut into four identical pieces, cover with a damp kitchen towel and leave to rest for an hour or so.

2 To prepare the filling, melt the butter in a skillet, add the meat with a little water and stir-fry until the meat is browned and nicely crumbled and all the juices have been absorbed. Stir in the onions and keep cooking for about two minutes more. Season with salt, sugar and a generous amount of black pepper. Add the herbs to the filling, stir and remove from the heat.

3 Take one piece of dough at a time and roll out with a rolling pin or *oklava* to a thin circular sheet. Brush one half with olive oil and fold the other half over it. Spread a quarter of the meat filling over the dough. Starting from the folded side, roll it up into a tube. Holding both ends, stretch the tube a little, then cut it into identical pieces about one finger long. Arrange the rolls, seam side down, on a greased baking tin.

4 Repeat with the remaining three pieces of dough, one at a time. This makes it easier to control and limits the dough's exposure to the air, which would make it dry and brittle.

5 Brush the böreks with the reserved egg white, sprinkle with nigella seeds and bake in a pre-heated moderate oven for half an hour.

◇

TABAK BÖREĞI
SAUCER BÖREKS

About 4 cups wheat flour
1 cup water
Salt
1 egg
1/2 cup olive oil
Extra flour or rice flour for rolling out
Oil for frying

This easy-to-prepare börek has a very vivid place in my childhood memories. The crisp texture is unforgettable. To finish on a sweet note, at the end of the meal, you dust the last remaining böreks with icing sugar.

1 Knead the flour, water, salt and egg into an elastic dough. Form into a ball and leave to rest, covered, for about an hour.

2 Using an *oklava* or a rolling pin, roll out the dough into a large sheet. Drizzle a little olive oil over the dough, spreading it evenly. Fold the four corners over the oiled surface to form a square. Fold again into an even smaller square and knead briefly to form a cylinder about the thickness of a large banana. Cut crosswise into equal slices about 1cm (one finger) thick.

3 Dust the work surface with a little wheat or rice flour and roll out each slice into circles about the size of a saucer. Repeat until you have used up all the dough.

4 Heat plenty of oil in a deep pan and deep-fry the circles on both sides until golden and irresistibly crisp. Serve straight away.

◇

TATAR BÖREĞI
TATAR BÖREK

About 4 cups wheat flour
1 cup water
Salt
2 tablespoons olive oil
Filling:
300g minced meat (mutton or veal)
1 medium onion (finely grated)
Salt and black pepper
Oil for cooking

This börek, with its succulent filling and soft casing, is almost a national dish among the Tatars of the Crimea, who have designed a kind of cast-iron wok known as *şöyün kazan* specially for cooking it. The dish is also known among the Tatars as *çibörek*, or raw börek, presumably because the meat filling is uncooked when placed inside the dough.

There are numerous variations, prepared at home by indefatigable Crimean housewives, all of them absolutely delicious. Washed down with the chilled yoghurt drink *ayran*, Tatar börek makes a whole meal in itself, and no guest is allowed to leave the table before consuming at least nine pieces.

1 Knead the flour, water, salt and olive oil into an elastic dough. Form it into a cylinder about the thickness of a banana, then slice it crosswise into even pieces about 1cm (one finger) thick. Cover with a damp cloth and leave to rest until needed.

2 Prepare the filling by mixing the meat with the onion. Season with salt and pepper and add a little water for a smoother consistency. (If the meat is lean, an extra tablespoon of olive oil helps to keep the filling moist.)

3 Press each slice of dough flat and roll it out into a circle the diameter of a handspan. Spread a little filling at one side of the circle. Fold the dough over the filling to create a half-moon. Press the edges with your fingers to seal. Repeat the process with the rest of the dough.

4 Drizzle a little oil into a wok or pan and cook each parcel separately on both sides, keeping it covered with a lid.

As the dough gets seared in seconds on the outside and develops blisters, the meat filling is braised in its own juices inside. Serve hot from the pan.

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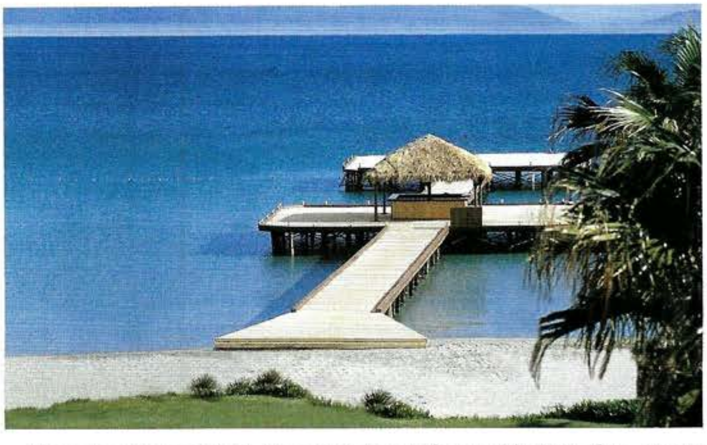

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In 2002, the third A & M prize was awarded to Karl Sabbagh, 62, for research about the concept of Palestine from early times to the present. His special focus was on Sheikh Daher el-Omar, the de facto ruler in the mid-18th century over an area of the Ottoman Empire that covered northern Palestine and southern Syria. The Sheikh was a patron of architecture and introduced a highly efficient administration, the head of which happens to be a direct relation of the prize-winner.

Other topics submitted include a study of Oriental porcelain overglaze-decorated in Europe; establishing a chronology of the Japanese Nabeshima kilns; a survey of the remains of the Seven Churches mentioned in *Revelations* 1-3; interpreting the function of Chinese archaistic altar vessels of the 18th century held in Taipei; and a field study at a village near Malatya of television's role in the migration of Turkish rural populations to larger cities.

SU BÖREĞI
WATER BÖREK

Flour
5 eggs
5 small coffee cups of tepid water
Salt

Filling:
200g white cheese or feta (crumbled)
Parsley and dill (chopped)
250g butter (melted)
5 more eggs

Rustic yet elegant, this börek is a subtle marriage of pasta and pastry: ten flat sheets of pasta dough, boiled then interleaved with a succulent savoury filling, are wrapped in two sheets of uncooked dough, which make a daintily crisp envelope when baked. This classic börek – a celebrity in all parts of the country – calls for time and expertise, and is usually bought from a shop.

1 Knead together the eggs, water, salt and as much flour as it takes to obtain a slightly stiff pasta dough. Form a cylinder and slice it into twelve identical pieces. Leave, covered, to rest.

2 Reserving two of the pieces, roll out the remaining ten into sheets roughly the size and shape of your baking tray.

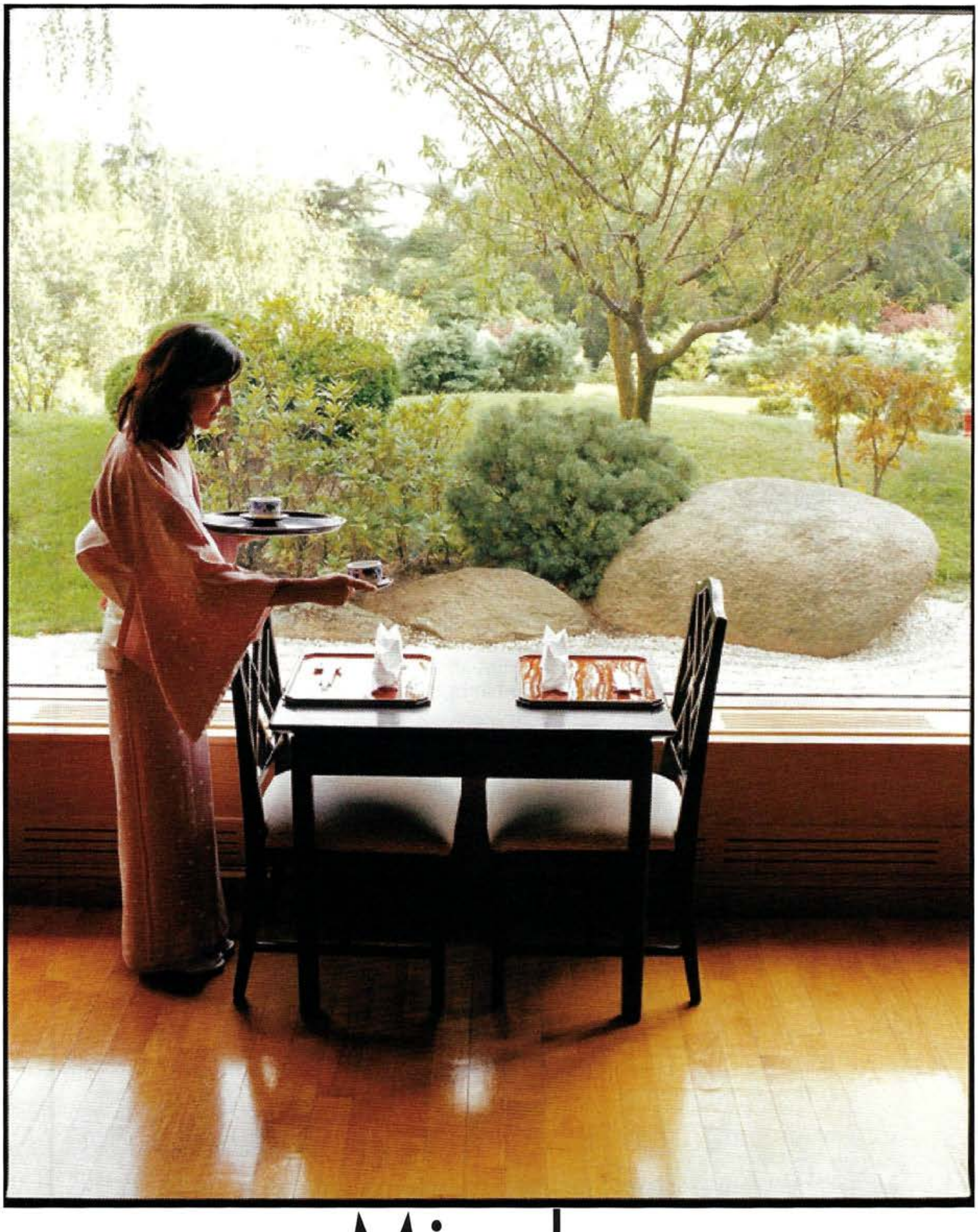
3 Bring plenty of salted water to the boil in a pan. One by one, cook the ten rolled-out sheets for two or three minutes in the boiling water, transfer with a skimmer to a basin of cold water and drain on an upturned colander.

4 To prepare the filling, mix the cheese, herbs, butter and beaten eggs.

5 Roll out one of the reserved pieces of dough as finely as possible and larger than the previous ones. Use it to line the base of the buttered baking tray, trimming off any excess around the rim. Arrange one of the sheets of scalded dough over it and drape it slightly. Spoon over some filling, spreading it evenly. Add the rest of the pasta sheets and the cheese filling in layers.

6 Roll out the last remaining piece of dough and place it on top to cover. Brush with a little extra butter and pinch the edges of the lid and the lining together to seal. Bake in a moderate oven or brown the base on a gas hob, turning it upside down with the help of a large tray to cook the other side. Some say the texture is softer this way. Serve cut into squares. ◆

Berrin Torolsan: bt@cornucopia.net



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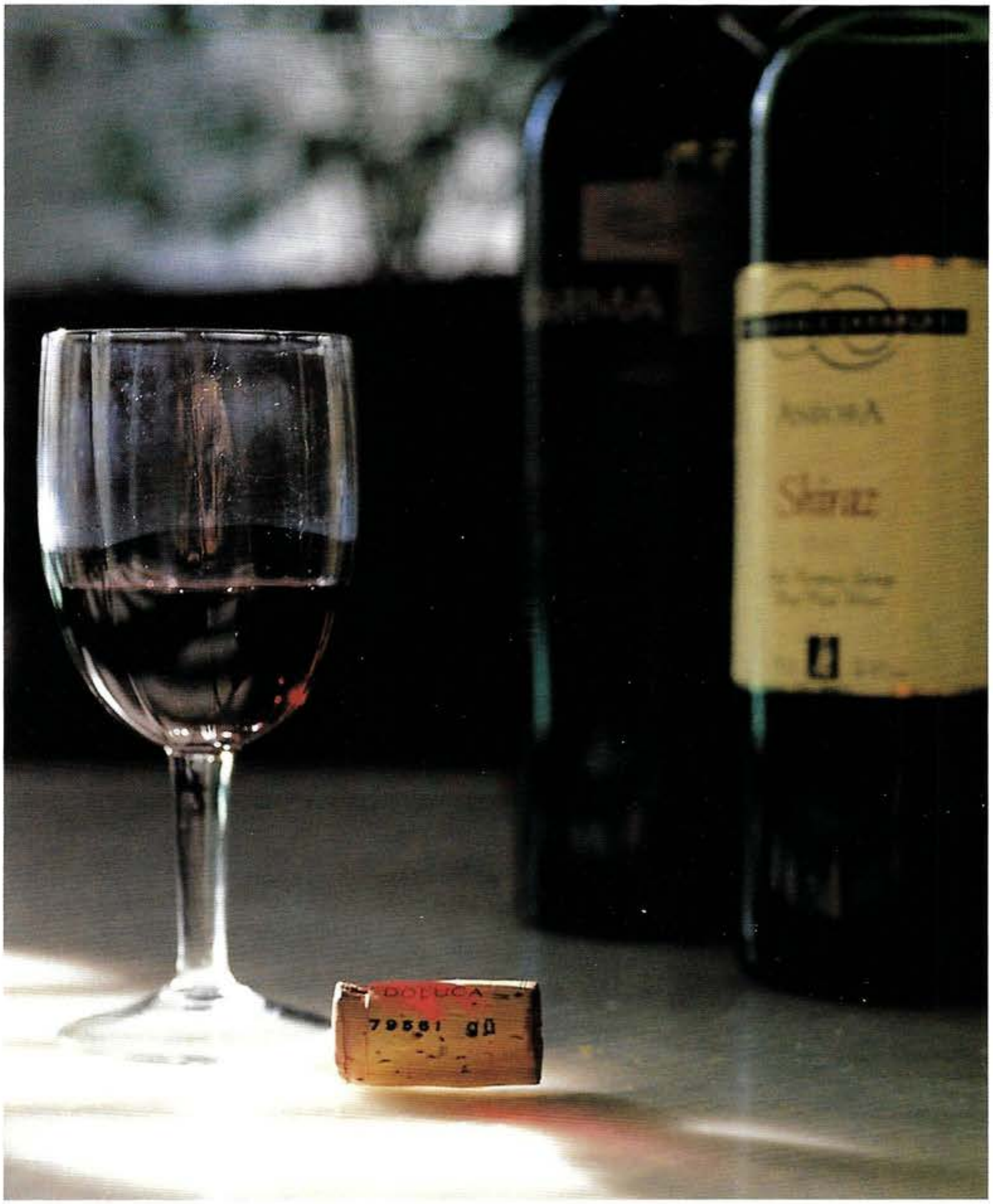

BERRIN TOROLSAN

On your marques

KEVIN GOULD SURVEYS THE TURKISH WINE SCENE

As with clothes, so with wine. The world wine business has become more fashion-conscious than the most avid *Vogue* reader. While hemlines rise or embonpoints bulge, so Chardonnay is soooo last year and Pinot Grigio becomes the grape *du jour*. Searching as ever for their *raison d'être*, winemakers around the world have banded together to market their bottles as definable products of their region.

Australia has led the way. By pooling marketing money and burying personal differences, Aussie winemakers have sold us the idea that their individual labels are sub-brands sheltering under a larger brand – their region – endorsed under the broad banner of "Australian Wines". The wine drinker is thus presented with simple, easily understood messages conveying that wines from, say, Barossa Valley are classy and rich, while those from Margaret River are softer and less complex.

Low pricing has played a big part in this success, as has the Australian ability to produce brash, fruit-driven, uncomplicated wines. Derided by complacent, arrogant European winemakers as "alcoholised grape juice" and for the "Coca-Colonisation of wine", Australian labels have taken the low- and mid-range wine world by storm; their model is enthusiastically copied by the South American and South African industries, as well as in emerging regions such as China and India.

Turkey is well positioned to learn and profit from the Australian story. She has many climatic regions, abundant, cheap land, available labour – and 3,000 years of vinous tradition. There is, however, something in the assertive character of her soil and the brave personalities of her peoples that means that Turkey, the world's fifth-largest grower of grapes, is unlikely to rival wine's New World in producing me-too mass-market wines.

Unable or unwilling thus far to achieve concord on marketing matters, the Turkish wine industry is instead in the throes of reinventing itself as a model of diversity. The shackles of a state alcohol monopoly have been shrugged off, albeit at the expense of a swingeing new wine tax that adds YTL2 to each bottle. Vineyard ownership and winemaking are the shiny new hobbies of travelled moneymakers, and the top two established labels – Doluca and Kavaklıdere – are investing heavily in new equipment, land and branding, while younger, thrusting wineries are now making their marques, occasionally with spectacular success. Though some regions (around Denizli, notably) are planting rootstock of ordinary, easy-grow European grape varieties as if there were no tomorrow, traditional grapes of yesteryear, such as Narince, Öküzgözü and Boğazkere, are given a fresh lease of life by being married to modern winemaking techniques.

Today's Turkish wines include the very good and the downright ugly. Yet it is this very lack of unanimity that makes the Turkish wine scene so fascinating and fresh. Seasoned by its ancient oenological history and largely shorn of the transient conventions of mere fashion, Turkey appears to be inventing its own particular language of wine. This is how a few bottles spoke recently to Cornucopia.

Kevin Gould is the author of *Loving and Cooking with Reckless Abandon* (Quadrille, £16.99) and *Dishy* (Hodder & Stoughton, £20). Both available from his website, www.dishy.net, or post-free to Cornucopia subscribers from www.cornucopia.net.

On the Turkish grapevine

WHITE

Kavaklıdere Tokat 1999
Narince grapes, YTL20.50
Kavaklıdere's policy is to retain a percentage of their better wines for maturing. This pert, curvy number spent 12 months in expensive French oak barrels. Appley and sexy on the nose, green and still a little chewy on the palate, it lengthens to reveal delicate layers of peardrops and musky cinnamon. Long as a summer's day and pretty as your sweetheart. Drink it on its own with someone you love.

Doluca Özel Kav 2001
Narince grapes, YTL18
Initially modest and understated, but a moment on the tongue and you soon realise that this beautiful summer wine is well-made, with a slim, supple body and a certain finesse. The wine equivalent of a string of perfect pearls, the perfect foil for *lakerda* or good smoked salmon.

Doluca 2001 Moskado *YTL15*
Dry Muscat wines should be perfumed and rich. This example promises much with its seductive nose of sweet-and-sharp stoned fruits, then surprises and confuses with an assertive, minerally follow-through. All fur coat and no knickers, as my granny used to say.

Kavaklıdere 2002
Sauvignon Blanc and Sultaniye grapes, YTL18
Sauvignon Blanc should seduce with great wafts of ripe tropical fruits whose scent lingers long. This example doesn't quite deliver such exotic excitement, being only an acceptable quaffer. Sarafin Sauvignon Blanc of the same age is a much better bet.

RED

Cankara Alaz 2003
Köhnü and Kösetevek grapes, YTL14
Two little-known grape varieties from this Izmir winery, which together combine to produce a wine with some nice Merlot-type characteristics. The label says "Organic" but there's no certifying seal to prove this. The nose says "wild and yeasty" but after a few minutes settles down to something more approachable. Good tannins, bright fruit and a lack of astringency make this a nicely structured drop, ideal for washing down a plate or two of *köfte* and *piyaz*.

Cankara Alaz 2003
Karasakız and Karalahana grapes, YTL8
A punishment compounded by poor winemaking that announces itself with twin whiffs of ammonia and chlorine. Again, two little-known varieties: *karalahana* carries a strong intimation of cabbages. And *sakiz* is dead-on: the wine tastes of mastic. Plumber's mastic.

Diren 2003
Kalecik Karası grapes, YTL20
The founder of the Dimes fruit-juice dynasty was passionate about wine and produced some notable vintages. Sadly his passing has signalled a vast decline in quality from this once-proud label. Thin, reedy, weedy and ammoniac. Avoid.

Pamukkale Anfora 2003
Shiraz grapes, YTL15
From a winery with big ideas, a big wine. First, a fruity, earthy nose, like the smell of a vineyard after summer rain. Then a modest "How do you do" before – " Pop!"– it grabs you in a bear hug with a burst of bright cherries and all the fertile excitement of a fruit stall at harvest time. Fabulous, and a bargain to boot. Drink with grilled meats or sea bass or over plates of hot and cold meze.

Doluca DLC 2002
Öküzgözü grapes, YTL15
There is a trend towards single-varietal wines, driven mostly from California, where Doluca have strong ties. Usually thought of only as a blending grape, Doluca's choice here of Öküzgözü is nicely justified. Luxuriate in its bouquet of over-ripe, squishy strawberries and steel yourself for the first sip. Rather rudely, DLC then starts an argument in your mouth, soon becoming conciliatory, with good dark strength and focus, before ending up as the type of wine with which you've made firm friends. Made for kebabs and raucous, indiscreet laughter.

Doluca Karma 2001
Cabernet Sauvignon and Öküzgözü grapes, YTL35
What we've been waiting for – a well-aged, perfectly balanced wine that could take its place at any table. As well as a pun meaning destiny/mixed, a harmonious blend of Western and Eastern grapes, whose unity is also evinced on tasting. Twin themes of tight, thin tannins and fat, luscious fruit make Karma an elegant, thoughtful, meditative wine, a bottle of which makes you feel pretty damn holy.

Kavaklıdere Ankara Selection 2003
Kalecik Karası grapes, YTL19
Imagine an attractive middle-aged man – a careful dresser, punctilious in his dealings – who quietly bullies you with his manners. Given time in the glass, this wine's nose will remind you of morello cherries. Taste it, and it seems initially restrained, deferential even, before insistent lingering berry and blackcurrant flavours require you to submit to its charm. Charmingly old-fashioned and very well made, a wine that dots its i's and crosses its t's, whilst making you mind your p's and q's.

Kavaklıdere Prestige Selection 2002 *Öküzgözü and Boğazkere grapes, YTL22*
All the fun of the fair. If this were music, it would be Offenbach's *Barcarole*: all hooting flutes and twittering strings. A multi-layered, deeply tantalising nose speaks of elegance and excitement. A mouthful of dryness that's never austere is balanced by vanilla-toned tannins, all uniting in a crescendo of ripe yet taut fruit. Excellent.

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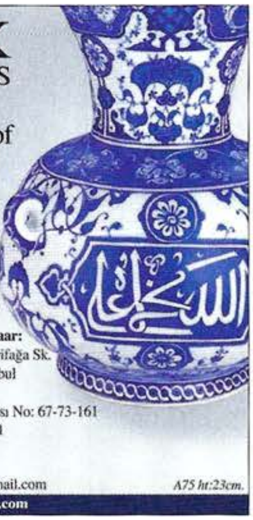

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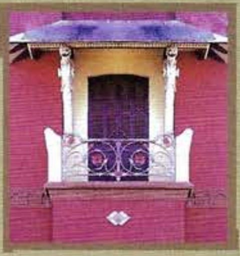

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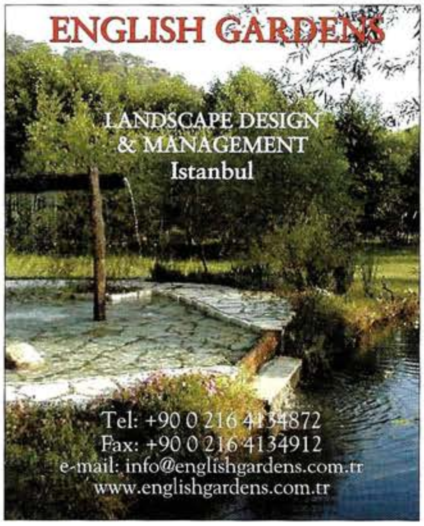

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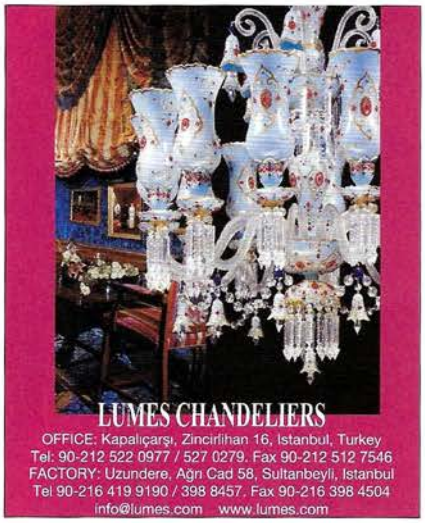

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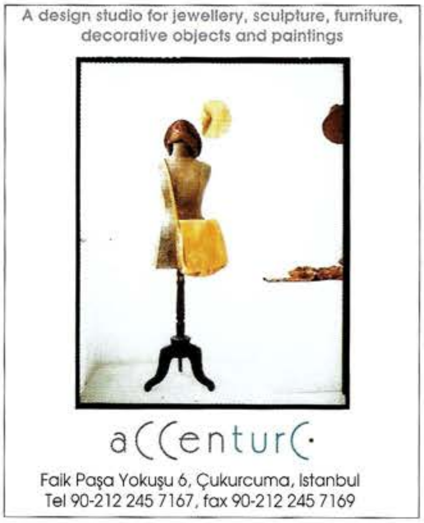

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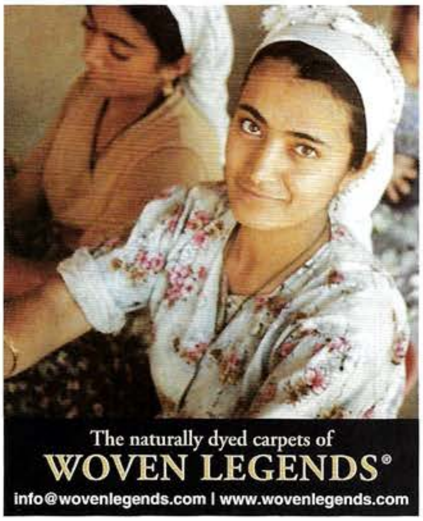

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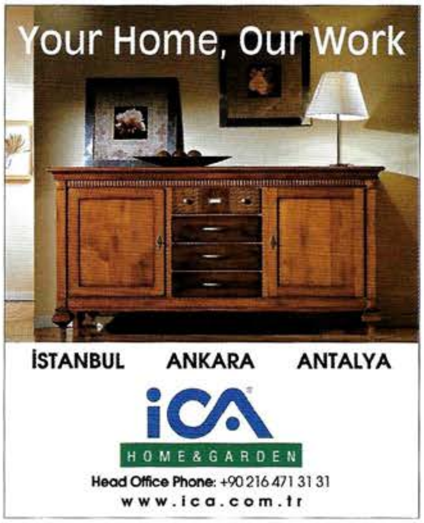

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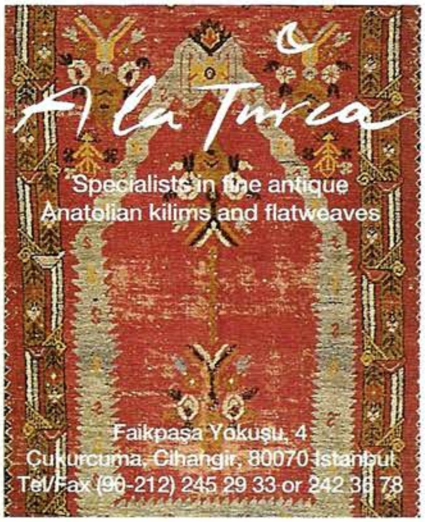

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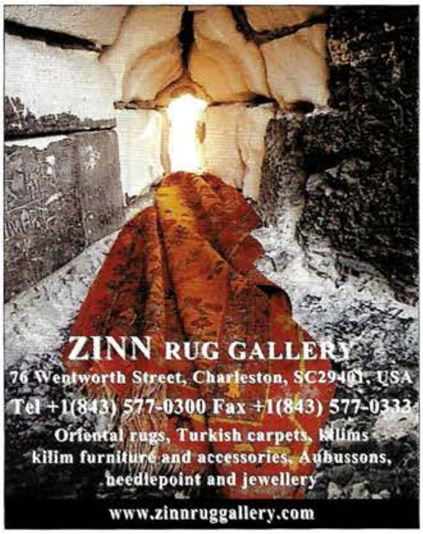

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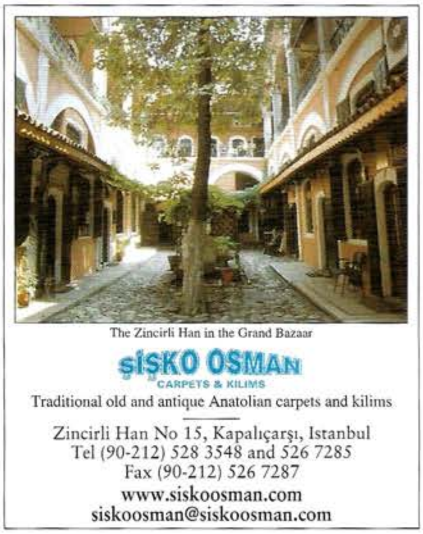

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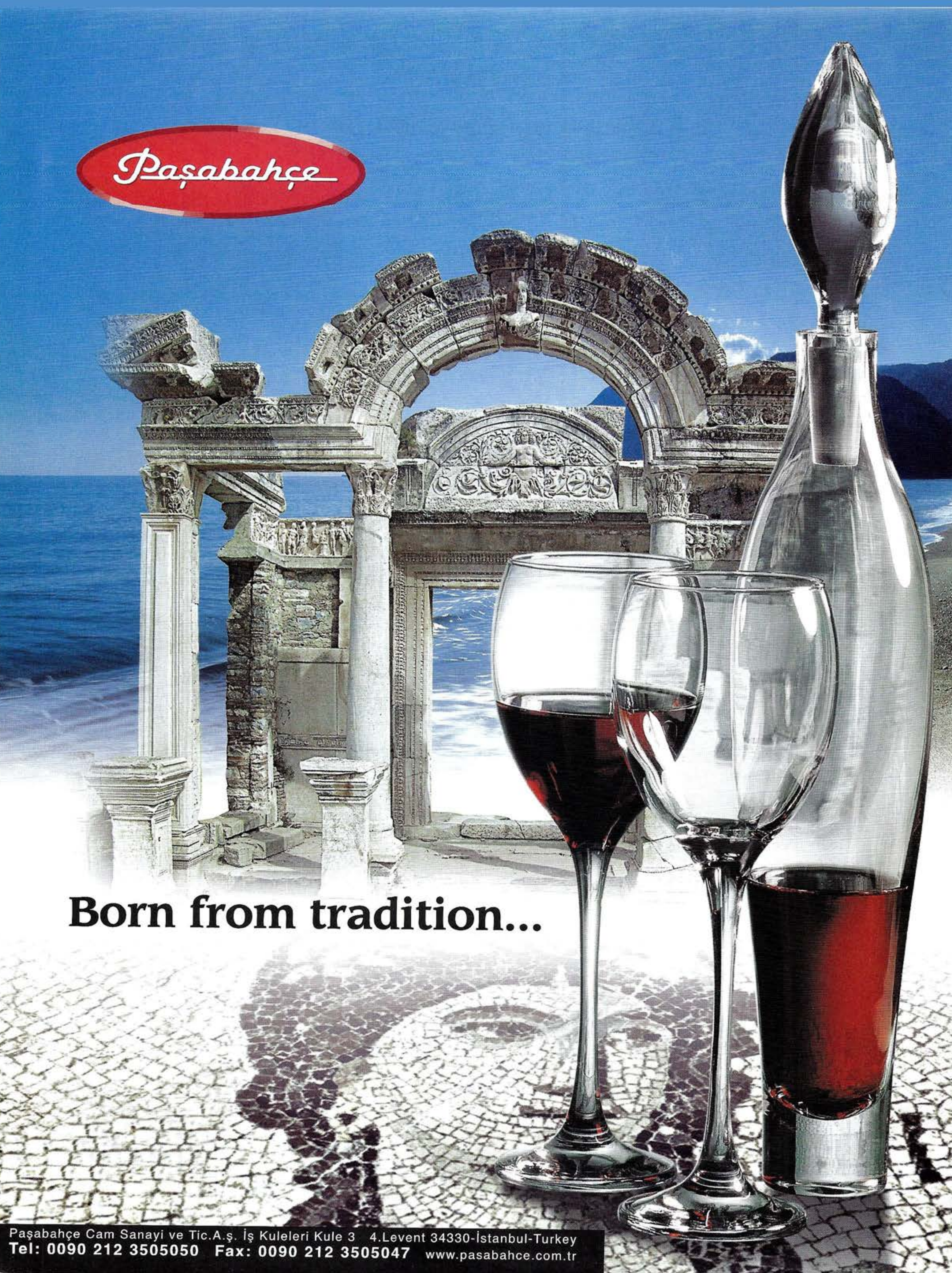
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VILLAGE VOICES

As Simba the dog dreams of squirrel stew, Azize Ethem welcomes the small creatures sharing her garden, sees news technology transform her local bank, tries not to be amused by her gardener's corset and stays well clear of stolen bananas

Winter wonders

So far our winter has been mild. Last year we were snowed in at the beginning of December. The lake rose to a thirty-year high and took over the end of the garden. Rıza has built a low cement wall to repel flooding, so of course the waters are low this year. It is only after living here for five years that we realise every dramatic act of nature that happens in Iznik is linked to a time span of thirty years. The wind that lifted roofs and uprooted trees was the strongest for thirty years. The snow last year… nothing seen like it in thirty years. The summer storm that pelted everything with golf-ball-sized lumps of ice… you're right: thirty years. I just wonder if these local sages were actually in this area three decades ago.

Over the past few years, as the garden has become more established, the number of birds has multiplied and a variety of small beasties have made their homes on our land. Last summer two red squirrels graced us with their presence and our dog, Simba, spent his days either trying to catch them or dreaming of squirrel stew. We have the odd snake or two and several families of stoats and weasels. The latter streak across the lawn, occasionally halting to stand on their hind legs and survey the land. Oddly, Simba the Wonder Dog has no interest in these creatures, reserving his less-than-sharp hunting skills for the red devils who taunt him from the trees. A huge hedgehog lives in the vegetable patch and underground cities of voles riddle the garden. Frogs and toads abound and at dusk bats swoop over the flowerbeds.

A few months ago we bought a mini-Rototiller machine – we had been trying to find one for years, but they were all too big. Finding a gardenish sort of advert in Cornucopia, I telephoned the number, and not only did they have what we needed but they delivered it to Iznik and gave us a lesson on using it. Rıza's work has been dramatically reduced and his love for this marvellous gadget is manifested by the fact that it sits, oiled and gleaming, in his seed shed, rather than in the hovel to which all other tools are relegated.

The strangest thing this winter is that the road has not yet been dug up. There are no ditches decorating the main road; not even a pavement out of action. No hint of roadworks anywhere. The only minor inconvenience is a detour on the street circling the ruins of the Roman theatre. This year the archaeologists found an ancient structure that extended under it, so the diggings take priority and one now has to navigate a loop of rutted track.

Iznik has the second-longest city walls in Turkey, and the new mayor has upset a load of people in his valiant effort to clean them up. Corrugated-iron sheds leaning against the ancient stonework have been demolished. Piles of building lumber have been moved and mountains of fruit crates banished. I think there must have been a squatter's-rights system, as people were enraged when forced to remove decaying shacks and mini-junkyards.

The bath of Murat I has also been given a facelift; no longer is it used as a firewood storage depot. The sign still reads *"Bat hofi Murat"*, but I guess someone will tell the authorities one day and we will get a correct but ordinary sign.

We have a new memorial park, to the left, just inside the Istanbul gate. It is the usual country-town bit of grass with lots of cement and the obligatory fountain, but at the far end, facing the 2,000-year-old gate is an impressive statue of a soldier. Behind it is a brass plaque listing the names of the Iznikian fighters who died in the War of Independence. The large number of names was a surprise to me. The fighting in this area was ferocious, with the town changing hands several times, and it is a miracle not more historic buildings were lost. In the past I gave scant thought to this most modern part of the town's history, but now every time I pass I wonder what happened to the families of the fallen.

Devilishly clever

It seems as if technology has suddenly surged ahead and left us far behind. Selim and I thought we were pretty sophisticated when he ordered ferry tickets by phone and paid with a credit card. He was told he could collect the tickets from any of the company's Istanbul offices. After queuing at an office, he was told to go to a machine outside and swipe his credit card through the slot. Magic – the tickets popped out. We were still mulling over this event when a friend lifted up her minute, slim-line mobile telephone and asked if she could take a photograph of us… with her telephone. For a couple who haven't mastered texting, this was mind-boggling. And now our television communicates with us: messages addressed to Selim appear, advising him of new satellite services. The first time it happened I nearly had a heart attack.

Our bank in Iznik has got in on the high-tech boom and installed a computer to spit out a little paper tab with a number on it for each client waiting to make a transaction. The tellers have small screens on poles, which display the next number. In theory this means everything is more efficient and nobody queue-jumps. It may work in the city but they should be offering us country bumpkins classes on how to prompt the machine to spit. It takes an absolute age to complete one's banking business. Village grandmothers are petrified of the screen one has to touch. They are sure it is the work of the devil and I am inclined to agree. Tourists can't read the Turkish script on the touch pads. A staff member has to leave their desk and show the poor souls what to do. Others press several commands and the screen has a multi-coloured fit and closes down. Everything stops while a technology buff comes from his cubbyhole at the back of the bank and resets the machine. Then we all sit and wait while the machine talks to big boss machine in Ankara. Only when it is happy and settled does bank business resume. An enterprising local arrived early one morning and collected a load of numbers which he then sold for a modest fee. The bank people were not amused and another money-making scheme bit the dust.

It has become a thing to brag about if you are in and out of the bank in less than forty minutes. The trick is to pop in, get a ticket, then try to judge how long it will be before your number is displayed on one of the poles. Once a decision is made, it is a quick trip to the "million store"(where nothing costs more than a million lira, around 30p), then down to the three brothers for the cheese and, tension rising, a speedy visit to the hardware store. As yet I haven't missed my number, but I err on the side of caution. It is a bonus which makes us all sit up in our chairs and get quite gleeful when a new number does not prompt someone to hurl themselves at the counter. Some unfortunate soul has been too long shopping and missed their turn – making mine five minutes closer.

I would close my account and move to an old-fashioned bank, but I fear once I feel comfortable and know the staff, they will go and install one of these wonders of modern science.

Noughts and crosses

With the Turkish Lira shedding six noughts and being renamed the Yeni Turkish Lira, I suppose the million store will have to change its name. Like "pound shops" in Britain, it sells a wonderful range of tat and I am impelled to nip in for a quick look just in case there is something I can't live without.

On the first Iznik market day after the currency change I was interested to see how the stallholders coped with the YTL. I'd expected the aged locals to be totally bewildered. But no, it was the youngsters who hadn't come to grips with it. The cucumbers on two young lads' stall still retained an obsolete nought, while the ancient crone next door was selling hers for a tenth of the price. Only later did I realise the more mature citizens could actually remember the days of the single-digit lira and the pre-rampant-inflation one hundred *kuruş* to the lira.

Dramatic ironies

With little work in the garden in winter, I have been able to spend more time in the sewing room. We start each day with a radio devotional session. Today the imam was talking about the need to turn off mobile phones while praying. It is obviously a problem he encounters regularly, as he did labour the point a bit. This is followed by morning tea and usually a spirited discussion on everyone's health. We never tire of the gory details of operations past and future, and everyone has a different cure for every ailment under the sun.

One morning a neighbour phoned to say Rıza had been knocked off his motorbike on the main road at the top of our track. By the time I arrived there was a crowd of at least fifty people. A barely conscious Rıza appeared to be covered in blood, but my concern abated a little when I saw the man from the petrol station throwing buckets of water over him. A speeding ambulance almost ran over several bystanders, and as Rıza (now in a neck brace) was loaded into the back, I was shoved into the front. I have never been in an ambulance before and, hurtling through the Iznik traffic, I found the best way to cope was to close my eyes.

At the hospital the scene was most impressive, just like one of those television hospital dramas. How badly Rıza was hurt I had no idea, but peeping through the door I saw him move his arm. I cannot describe the relief a mere twitch of an arm can produce. It was decided he had to be transferred to a hospital in Bursa for a CAT-scan, and as he was taken back to the ambulance, the driver waved to me to clamber back in. With siren blaring, we did the return trip. I was dropped off at the scene of the accident and poor Rıza sped on towards Bursa.

There was still a group of people standing around Rıza's mangled machine. Everyone seemed convinced he would die. Four men carried his bike to a neighbour's yard and I carried home his jacket and bag. Selim was in Istanbul and I felt rather lonely as I sat and worried; after all, the small movement of an arm doesn't amount to much in the mortality stakes. Early evening, as I tried to piece together Rıza's shattered mobile phone, Selim rang to say he had received a spate of phone calls from Iznik. The carpenter had rung to ask him to drop in for a cup of tea, and several others had rung to see how he was. Later we heard I had been seen, face screwed up, eyes shut, in the front seat of the local ambulance. None of the callers mentioned this when they rang in case he worried. The caring concern of the Turkish people never fails to touch me.

Just before I turned in for the night, the phone rang again. This time Rıza was on the line. I couldn't believe it and got a bit weepy. He was home, patched, stitched and discharged. Definitely very much alive. Two days later, bandaged, bruised and moving slowly, he was back in his beloved garden, not trusting me to take care of things. His wounds soon healed, but he developed a nagging backache which he treated by wearing a very stiff elasticised corset. This was worn outside his clothes and to me looked decidedly bizarre, but as nobody else found it odd I was careful not to grin when he hitched it up.

Trolley wars

I am not sure what is going on, and why Iznik has been chosen, but we seem to be the site of a supermarket war. A year ago, any grocery item that was not basic was not to be found in our local shops. Things like wholemeal flour or linguine were put on the Istanbul shopping list. Now three shops have been opened, in various parts of the town, by Turkey's

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biggest supermarket chain. A month ago a second chain opened a store on the main street. How they can survive in a town with a population of 20,000 I haven't a clue. Perhaps we have been zoned as a tax-loss area, or maybe competition has got out of hand. I am not complaining, I feel quite sophisticated, whizzing round with my trolley, even though the aisles are so narrow it only takes one stout village woman ensconced in front of a display to cause a pile-up of trolleys.

Hot bananas

In the past year the world has seen ongoing mayhem and madness. The results of the actions of despots and brain-washed killers have filled the news bulletins, nature shrugged her shoulders and Asian shores were devastated. With a dread of what news each day will bring, we have found great solace in reading the parochial local newspaper. Like small-town papers all over the globe, the bigger picture is ignored and events never picked up by the media syndicates fill the pages.

Last week the headline story was of a daring banana heist. Hardened robbers broke the shutters of a local greengrocer's and raided the till. Finding no money, they stole forty kilos of bananas. The report went on to say that the police have dusted the premises for fingerprints and the investigation is continuing. As the stolen goods were imported bananas, we are only buying local ones at the moment. I would hate to find the house surrounded by the local SWAT team because I had bought fenced fruit. But there is something comforting in the knowledge that banana thieves are headline news in the Bursa province.

It is a privilege to live in a town where one leaves the car unlocked, where the staff of restaurants that I visit infrequently remember I am allergic to capsicum. Where one's shopping is carried to the car. Where people smile. ◆

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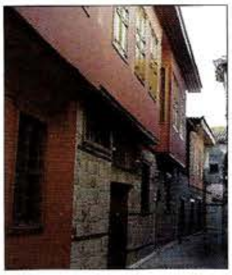

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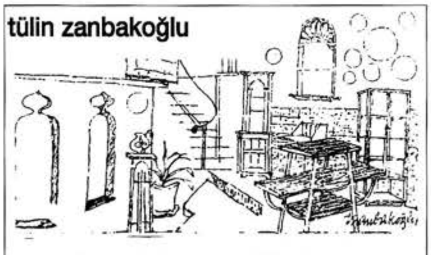

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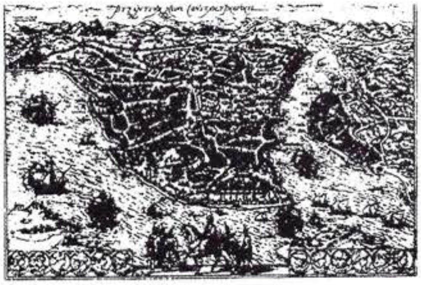

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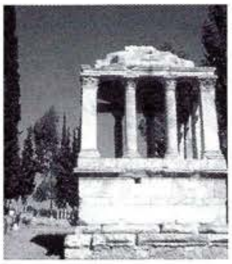

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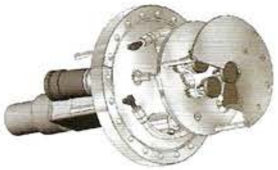

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ISTANBUL RESTAURANTS
MEZES: STARTING FROM

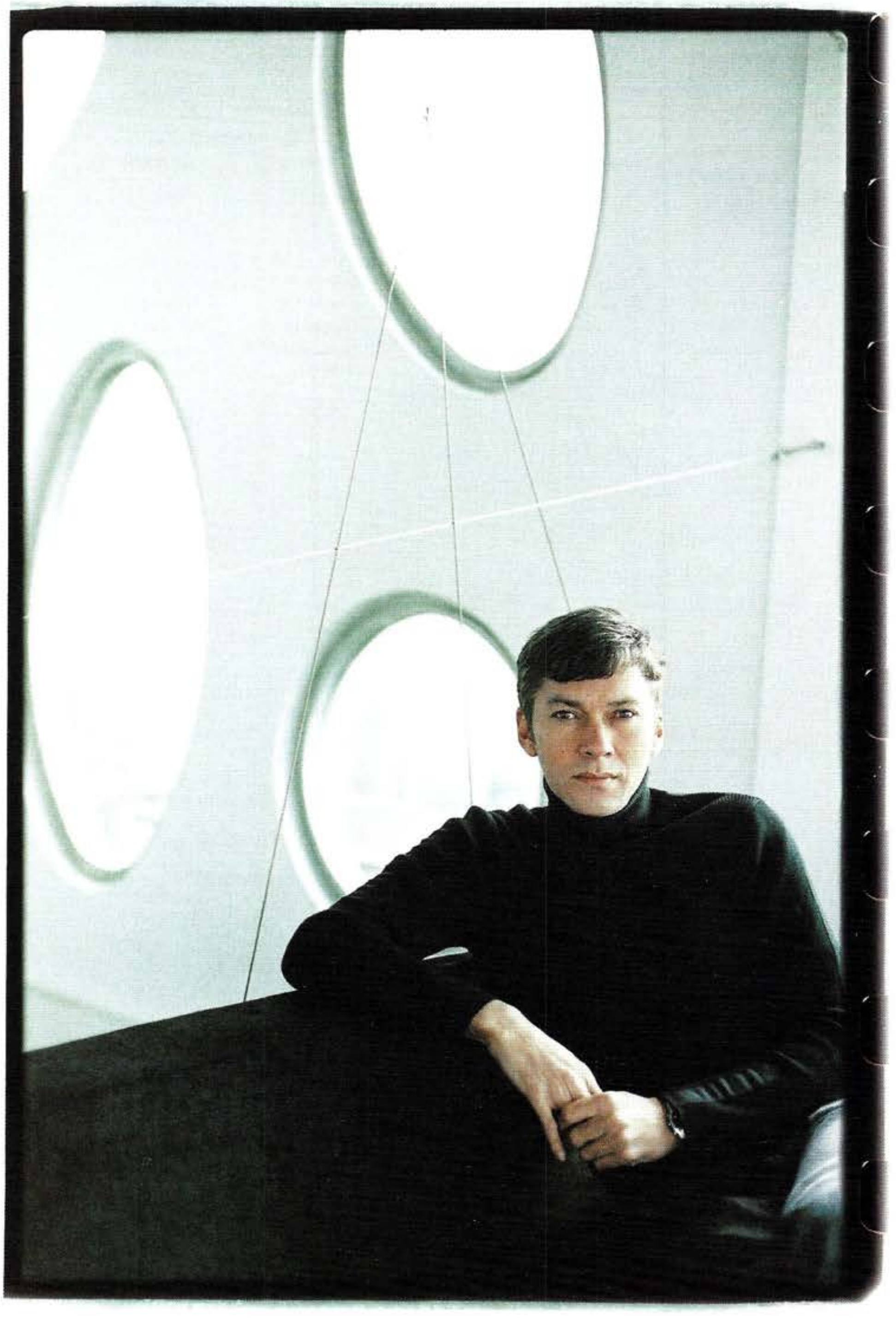
OLD FAVOURITES AND NEW ATTRACTIONS: ANDREW FINKEL SAMPLES ISTANBUL'S BEST MEYHANES

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SIMON WHEELER

Istanbul is a city which worships good food, but where there is no real pantheon of celebrity chefs. In part, this is because its chomping classes see their next meal as the result of effortless craft rather than tortured inspiration. They seek not so much the unique, but the familiar executed that little bit better than anyone else. If this makes Istanbul sound conservative, it is not. It is less resistant to innovation than able to absorb it so quickly that what seemed novel on Monday is humdrum by the end of the week. The restaurant gurus are not the chefs but the proprietors who set the trends. They break in new styles, open establishments, then shut them again with the ruthless drive of a post-rider.

Just occasionally Istanbul produces not so much a kitchen celebrity as an anti-hero like Refik Arslan, who has nursed a glass of rakı and a bit of white cheese at the establishment that has borne his name for the some fifty years. His gravel voice and grumpy temperament are as much a feature of the Beyoğlu back streets as the leaning tower is of Pisa. Paunchy intellectuals go there to smoke and drink and harangue their friends; followers of fashion go there on a night off just to be themselves; a new generation comes to re-invent their own tradition of cosmopolitan life; and the odd *New York Times* correspondent turns up to report on what is truly authentic about a Turkish evening out. No one, I suspect, goes there for the food, any more than anyone goes to the Pig and Whistle because their draught lager is more luxuriously carbonated than the Dog and Duck's.

Refik is a *meyhane* – culturally related to a pub, since it is hard to imagine sitting there without drinking, but, as it is equally unthinkable to drink without food, a restaurant as well. Main courses are perfunctory and often you don't get that far. Mezes are the heart of the meal. In the old days, Refik explains, he would serve a "rakı platter" – a small bottle with a tray of seven different types of starters. Now you pick and choose the hors d'oeuvres yourself. And there is no need to reach out to sample the sauce on your partner's



THE TOP

Refik
Rakı kitabın
%80
Refik Meyhanesi
İstanbul klasiği 50 yaşınd

plate, since the whole point is to share dishes. Everyone is an expert: the talk – "Try some of this aubergine" or "The liver is not as good as next door" – means that the standard of *meyhane* cuisine never dips far below the norm.

Not everyone holds Refik to be the *primus inter pares* of Istanbul *meyhane*. Everyone has their favourite, chosen for a particular dish or, more likely, because they expect to bump into their friends. If there is a similarity about the fare, it is not just because news travels fast through the narrow streets but because most of the *meyhanes* are related: Yakup of **Yakup 2** fame is Refik's brother; the proprietor of **Saki** used to be the head waiter at **Asır;** while the owner of Asır used to be the head waiter of his own establishment before the old Greek proprietor died. It is one long culinary soap opera. As for Refik himself, he started off working at the age of fourteen for "Papa" Fischer, opposite the British embassy, and is still proud of his rarely tested skill in producing the perfect, very un-*meyhane*-like Schnitzel.

There were appreciative oohs and ahs as the food circulated the other night at **Akbaba** – a new establishment in the attractive open-aired passageway directly across from Tünel. The "vulture" referred to in the name of the restaurant was the title of Turkey's most famous humour magazine, founded even before Refik. To up sales in its final years, the magazine resorted to risqué caricatures on the cover, and these adorn the walls, providing all the sauce the restaurant needs. The tastes are sharp and fresh and include good *topik* – a chickpea paté with a tahin and onion centre – and crisp *gül böreği* – a pastry rosette. Akbaba is decorated in a pleasing Thonet-chaired retro style, with only the bright halogen lighting to remind you of the actual year. This is probably better than having the whole room antiqued and the entirely acceptable

LEFT: CELEBRITY CHEF AND ANTI-HERO, REFIK ARSLAN IN HIS EPONYMOUS BEYOĞLU MEYHANE. FAR LEFT: MIKE NORMAN, WHOSE NEW RESTAURANT, 360, TAKES ITS NAME FROM ITS PANORAMIC ROOFTOP VIEWS converse of leaving a corner of a restored historical building in its original state.

The lighting is suitably dingy at **Despina,** an authentically hoary *meyhane* away from Beyoğlu in the old Greek district of Kurtuluş. Time and the meze tray stand still here, but a pair of sharp eyes at our table, with vision heightened by drink, noted that that the rough-textured stucco walls were probably an innovative attempt to look old. Despina is now famous not for the food but for an argument between three middle-aged men which resulted in the one whose manhood was in question drawing a revolver and shooting dead the other two. He then wanted to kill himself but was talked out of it by the police – all live on national television. Having seen the gore of Tarantino films, it did occur to me that the incident, now some time ago, may have been the reason for redecorating the walls.

There was nothing life-threatening about our dinner there, with the possible exception of a small band of musicians who circulate from table to table, strumming mournfully and encouraging you to break into song. I would recommend the sautéed meat for main course, but the fried anchovies were flavourful – as, of course, was the mood.

So where does that leave **360** – a newcomer to Beyoğlu and very much not a *meyhane,* but not what I expected either? It is the work of Mike Norman, a former executive chef at the Çırağan and a partner in the now defunct Chefs – a restaurant which tried to get its clientele to focus on the food on their plate rather than who was sitting at the table on the far side of the room. Chefs helped raise the bar on what a well-run kitchen was all about, but the sorry truth is that the top end of the Istanbul scene is still ruled by fashion, not by loyalty. Restaurants draw from a relatively small client base – the locusts who swarm to the latest spot and strip it bare before moving on.

Norman's 360 takes its name from the extraordinary roof-top bird's-eye view from one Beyoğlu's most elegant apartment blocks. The restaurant is a glass cage from which you can see every corner of the city. It had not officially opened the night we had dinner there, and it may be unfair to compare the uncertainty of the service to the drill of the *meyhanes* at street level below, rehearsed over decades. The menu, too, was a little bit indecisive. There was sea bass in a potato crust, peppery wok-seared ostrich breast, lamb with an over-floury *beğendi* (aubergine purée) and even beef with Chinese noodles. Those who cherish the memory of Chefs for its puddings may be disappointed. The unlikely-sounding *cappuccino tira mi su* was tasty, with an element of surprise, but on the whole the desserts were indelicate and too sweet.

After trying to build a gastronomic edifice at Chefs, Norman has leaned the other way. He has created a wonderful space, but it is something of a marquee, where everything can change. The interesting thing about 360 is that it has, at the front of the menu, a notion of modern mezes. They are not designed to astonish: a bit of fried Cypriot *helim* cheese with a sweetish sauce, falafel – and the squid with a hard, almost chicken-nugget-type crust was a little bit bland. Celeriac, braised with olive oil and brightened up with orange, deserves praise. They are there as a tribute to a style of eating.

Despite its provenance, 360 is not overly expensive for a formal evening out. We paid a similar sort of bill (YTL60–80) at **Dilara's Abra Cadabra** – twee-sounding but not the most twee on ultra-twee Fransız Sokağı, or French Street. This is a set of steps running down from Beyoğlu to Çukurcuma that has become a sort of restaurant alley. As a tribute to the French embassy, which helped pay for its restoration, the establishments have names like Gitane, Point Virgule and even Ooh La La. The food at Dilara's is not twee, however, and not even French. The owner did not buy into French Street but converted her own house into a restaurant. Her card gives the address defiantly as the original name of the street – the anti-imperial Cezayir (or Algeria) Street.

The meal had the attractive quality of good dinner-party food. What regional influences it has are Black Sea, but the menu is a reflection of what's on sale at the market that day. I had a pheasant – braised in wine then baked – intricately garnished with pickled wild mushrooms and a sort of chipped potato. The pork ribs were not Southern-style but marinated in apple and prune and charcoal-smoked. Dessert arrived unbidden, a thin sheet of white chocolate mixed with poppy seed, to be dipped in a fruit and chilli sauce. There was good bread and of course mezes to begin with. Raw clams, spiced with ginger and balanced on a bed of salt, were memorable, and not something you will ever find at Refik.

◆

Refik: Sofyalı Sok 10–12, Tünel, Beyoğlu; +90-212 243 2834
Saki: Kameriye Sok 11/A, Balıkpazarı, Beyoğlu; +90-212 244 1683 or /240 4027
Asır: Kalyoncu Kulluğu Cad 94/1, Beyoğlu (off Tarlabaşı Caddesi, next to the police station); +90-212 250 0557 or /256 3438
Akbaba: Tünel Geçidi, Beyoğlu; +90 212 251 4338
Yakup 2: Asmalı Mescit Sok 35-37, Tünel, Beyoğlu; +90-212 249 2925
Despina: Açıkyol Sok 9, Kurtuluş; +90-0212 247 3357
360: Mısır Apt K8, Istiklâl Cad 32/33, Beyoğlu; +90-212 251 1042 or /251 1043; fax /251 1048
Dilara's Abra Cadabra: Cezayir Sok 6, Beyoğlu; +90-212 244 4745; dilara.erbay@mailcity.com

SMOOTHIES

BY HETTIE JUDAH

The Istanbul restaurant scene's passionate embrace of the modern is for the most part as prone to cliché as any other love affair. Rudely exposed brickwork walls, ceilings crisscrossed with giant silver ventilation pipes and the whole 1980s New York arty-loft vibe has recently crept across the city like impetigo. Menus are crippled by aimless omnivorousness, endless pages of pastas and pad thais and steaks and schnitzels, as if modernity inevitably brings a credo-free democratic blandness. But hidden – often literally – away from the Perspex chairs and ruthless door policies of their peers are some extraordinary places.

Changa

A seriously experimental fusion restaurant, Changa is now at the height of its powers after a few rocky years spent negotiating the fit between novelty and deliciousness. The design is sleek, but not aggressively so, matching the classic proportions and plasterwork of the existing interior with contemporary art and stealable tableware. There is a Turkish base – *helim* cheese, vineleaves, liver, chestnuts and celeriac are regular features – but from there things go into the wild and fabulous, as in the unexpected gummy texture of a cuttlefish roe starter with coconut shavings.
Sıraselviler Cad 87/1, Taksim; +90-212 249 1348

Safran

Safran has survived four changes of venue in as many years, yet remains a beloved institution. The latest move is from an establishment with cruise-ship dimensions into a caressingly elegant first-floor apartment in Çurkucuma with lustrous mid-nineteenth-century tilework and the intimate atmosphere of a private club. The menu has shrunk, likewise, to a scant twenty or so dishes characterised by an informed and playful take on local ingredients – chard soufflé, or octopus salad with pomegranate syrup. It is almost impossible to find; there is no frontage to the restaurant save for a very discreet sign above eye level; once there, customers tend to make a night of it, and after a certain hour the atmosphere switches from discreet dining to wild party.
Hanif Han, G. Erol Dernek Sok 11/1, Beyoğlu; +90-212 251 2624 or /2696

Lokanta

There are style crimes here – this is Istanbul's ur-loft-style restaurant after all – but there is no escaping the fact that the food is terrific. Chef Mehmet Gurs cooks with a passion for his ingredients; he cares about the little fishies and the tender springy lamblets, and such an engaged approach pays off in the end results. Octopus carpaccio, shrimps with spinach and chili, classic Turkish dishes like lamb shanks – all evoke moans of pleasure.
Meşrutiyet Cad 149/1, Tepebaşı, Beyoğlu; +90-212 245 6070

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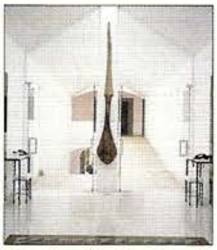

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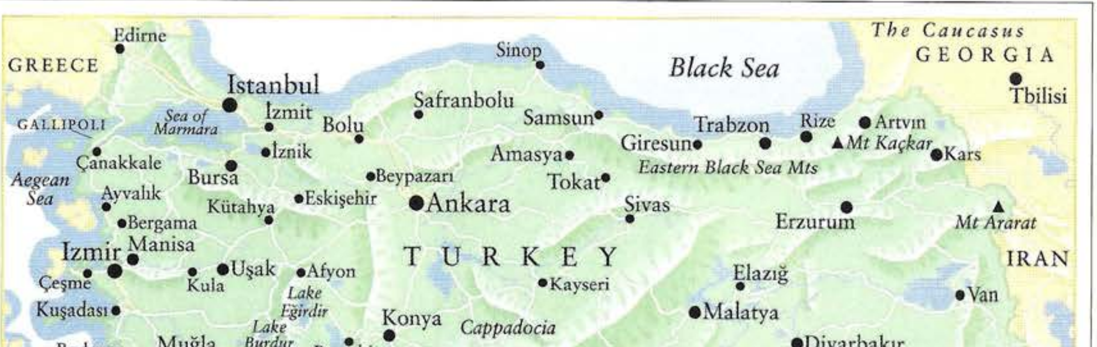
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